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My Experiences at the Classic City High School

Introduction

Before going to the Classic City High School, I did not know what to expect. I was nervous that the students would not like me or that I would not be able to connect with them. My first day was not until the first week in February, so I had to go twice a week in order to make up for some hours. I realized though that going twice a week would also make it easier to have a stronger relationship with the students in the class, and I was right. For the sake of privacy, I have changed the names of the teacher and students that I worked with. I was in Mrs. Jones' fourth period Language Arts class, which was an interesting class. It was not a face-to-face class, so all of the students worked on different subjects on the e2020 or Rosetta Stone website. Over the semester, I worked with several different students, mainly because the class was very small, and the students either went to another class or left early.

The Institution

Classic City High School is completely different than the structure of my high school. The only classes that were ever online were the business and computer science electives, but at Classic City it seems like the majority of classes are online with the exception being some math, science, and English courses. The online format definitely has its pros and cons for students. Some students are more visual learners and need to see the teacher actually write something out instead of watching it on the computer screen. Also, being on the computer is just asking for a

student to get on another website totally unrelated to their coursework. Even though the school computers have blocked certain websites like Quizlet and Yahoo Answers, I still feel like it is easy for the students to cheat because all they have to do is pull out their phone and Google a question, giving them full access to websites with the answers to the questions on a test or quiz. But, having the classes online gives students an opportunity to catch up on schoolwork at home should they have the technology and wifi available. I was with the students during fourth period, so by the time that I got there, they were restless and ready to leave. So it would be struggle for them to log into e2020 and actually get started on their work. The technology definitely helped in their procrastination because they would spend twenty minutes creating song playlists on Spotify, Also, not all of the students I worked with had access to a computer or wifi once they left campus, and so it would be difficult to work on their homework outside of school. One thing I noticed in CCHS was the lack of cyber bullying and bullying. The second book we read, *Bullying and Cyberbullying: What Every Educator Needs to Know*, discusses the importance of creating safe zones by eliminating outside factors such as cell phones and social media. Because the administrative staff at CCHS banned access to Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat, I feel like it reduced the chances of bullying to take place.

The Teachers and Administrators

I absolutely loved the faculty and staff at the Classic City High School. Every time I would sign in, the secretary at the front desk would ask me how I was doing or how my weekend was. She was so friendly that it helped a lot with my nervousness over mentoring the students. Also, Mrs. Jones was such a great teacher to be around. She always encouraged the students even when they were being difficult. Another thing that I really liked was that she always had crackers or applesauce available for the students especially because it was fourth period so it has been

almost two hours since lunch, so everyone is tired and ready to go home, but she somehow made it work. The graduation coach was also super encouraging to the students. There was not a day that would go by that I did not see her talking to a student about what they needed to do to graduate on time or help them get into classes they needed. It was refreshing to see so many staff members invested in their students while also being passionate about their jobs.

The Students

The first half of the semester, I did not really have one specific person that I worked with. I would just jump around if someone needed me or I would sit and make sure a student was on task. It was not until after we got back from spring break that a student, who got added into the class, grabbed me and basically told me that I was going to help her until I was done with my hours. Her name was Joanne. She is very outgoing and is not afraid to ask or admit she needed help. She loves fashion and works at a department store in Athens. Because she is Hispanic, Joanne gets asked to translate customers for her coworkers, but she does not mind because that means she gets to stay clocked in longer. Her family has only one car, so sometimes she has to wait around for her mom to come and pick her up from work. While at school, Joanne has a good relationship with Mrs. Jones. She definitely hated Lit 11, which was what I was helping her with. One thing I noticed was that she hardly ever listened to the lecture videos nor did she take any notes. She would just press next until there was an assignment, quiz, or test. One of the aspects that I loved about Joanne was that she would get onto her friend whenever she missed school. Students skip school all the time, so it was awesome for Joanne to take on that responsibility.

Me as a Mentor, Tutor, and Future Educator

I feel like in some ways I did reach some of the students on some level. For instance, I helped one of the guys in the class apply to a Chick-fil-A in Athens, and he got the job, so I have

gone up there and visited him a few times at work. As a tutor, I think I was able to help Joanne have a better grasp on how to answer questions the best way especially on the computer because sometimes the questions get convoluted, so you have to narrow it down to the best possible answer even if it seems wrong. When it came to getting students to focus on their work, I got uncomfortable because I did not know if I was going to cross any line between just being a tutor and the teacher. My experience at the Classic City High School has definitely impacted me as a future teacher. For one, I want to work in a school similar to CCHS. Also, it has taught me the importance of really getting to know your students and understanding where they come from and what makes them the individuals that they are. The first book we read, *Slam School: Learning Through Conflict in the Hip-Hop and Spoken Word Classroom*, was a real life example of how beneficial relating to your students is. It is one of the major reasons why I think knowing where a student comes from is one of the most important parts of being a teacher.

Conclusion

Mentoring at CCHS has made me think about how I want to teach in my own classroom. I plan on teaching my class in a way that is engaging while also being relatable and fun. In *Why Don't Students Like School*, it provides tips for teachers to teach their class in a way that makes it relatable to the students. I would also like to promote more class discussions because I feel like that is the easiest way to engage students while also letting them say what is on their minds. My time at the CCHS has been amazing, and I am so sad to see it end. I am so grateful for the opportunity it provided for me, and I will never forget the impact it has had on my life and my future classroom.