

**Lisa Shurtz**

**Classic City High School Journal**

**Dr. Smagorinsky**

*April 17, 2017*

It's my last day with the class. Mrs. Smith is out, and there is a PhD student from UGA substituting today. I get there early because I have a cooler with water and banana pudding and containers of cookies, brownies, and Takis. I introduce myself and tell her about our class and why we volunteer at Classic City. She is getting her PhD in Educational Law and has an interesting story. We talk about her experience that day as the students start to enter the classroom.

She takes attendance. Ann, Randy, Janet, Natasha, Zane, Tina, and Jeff are here. Jeff checks to make sure I brought the goodies. The substitute reads Mrs. Smith's instructions for the day which include completing five worksheets. Some worksheets were started in prior classes; two are new. The students groan like they have in previous classes, and some begin to work on them.

We decide to let them eat the snacks while they work. Ann has only the two worksheets to complete. She tells me that one she did for homework took a long time because Mrs. Smith asked them to solve for three different components. Others listen, deciding that's too much work. Some are unmotivated to start the worksheet. Others, like Natasha, try to jump in, asking me questions as she works the problems. Because Mrs. Smith isn't there, it's difficult to keep most students focused and working. They talk to each other in between working the problems.

At the end of class, I thank them for welcoming me and letting me become a part of their class. I got hugs from Ann and Janet and several thanked me for the treats. I drove to UGA happy in my heart for this experience. It wasn't as daunting as Ms. Mary had portrayed, and it was so much more rewarding than I had anticipated. It solidified my desire to teach in a public high school. I love this age group, and I feel confident that I will be able to connect with them as I educate them.

As I wrap up my journal, I reflect on what I learned during this experience. The biggest take-away is connection. I want to form a personal connection with each of my students, which I hope will motivate them in my classroom. Mrs. Smith did not seem to take a personal interest in her students. I think this approach reflected in their dislike for her class and their lack of motivation. I also learned strong classroom management techniques. Establish a few rules, and stick to them. The students don't need to be overly governed, so enforcing a few key rules (like no cell phones and headphones) is manageable. Each student also learns at their own pace. Having a mentor in the classroom was an advantage. I may not have one when I teach. I need to spend more time researching, thinking about, and practicing different ways of teaching new material. I want my students to understand and engage with the material.

However, I am also realistic. I will not reach every student, and I will not be able to motivate every student. I understand that fact. Each student is an individual who learns in different ways and is motivated by different factors. To some, English class will be viewed as a waste of time. Others will like it and see its value. My job is to equip these students with skills they need to graduate from high school, and I hope that, in the process, I teach them skills they can use when they leave my classroom.

### April 14, 2017

Today's Essential Question is "How do I find the 2 acute angles of a right triangle when given 2 or more side measures?" I'm happy to see more students in class today – Ann, Randy, Janet, Jeff, and Zane. I ask Janet where she was on Wednesday. She had been suspended. She told me that the administration confused her with her sister who got in trouble. They were both suspended from school. I decided not to ask any more questions about it.

Zane tells me that he's going to be in this class until the end of the school year. I like him. He's quiet and studious. He seems like he wants to learn.

At the beginning of class, Janet goes to the bathroom. It's her usual request, just a little earlier in the class period this time.

Jeff is rowdy and rambunctious but in a great mood! He sings and talks to Ann, bothering her almost like a brother aggravates a sister. She's ok with it for a few minutes but then gets a little irritated because she can't concentrate.

Ms. Kauffman came in to talk about prom tickets. A few had been sold but not enough to have prom. The school extended ticket sales through Wednesday. I was shocked that tickets were only \$5. Then, I think "only" \$5? I'm accustomed to \$100 or more for proms in our high schools. I know that \$5 to these families is equivalent to \$100 to ours.

Ms. Kauffman explains they will refund the money if they don't sell enough tickets or they may do something special for those who bought tickets. She emphasizes that the school doesn't want to do anything the students don't want to do. Ann has already bought a ticket and seems excited to attend the prom. Mrs. Smith whispers to me that some of the girls can't afford to buy dresses or find them in their dress sizes. It makes me sad.

When Ms. Kauffman leaves, the students focus on the angles worksheet. They are quiet. I am impressed with Jeff because he already knows the trigonometric formulas for sine, cosine, and tangent. The students have special calculators that have these functions built in. They teach me how to use my phone to get these formulas. I simply have to turn my phone sideways in the calculator app, and I can complete the worksheet problems using my phone. Wow, they taught me something today. I love this part of teaching. I am not one who believes that the teacher is or should be "all knowing". While we know our subject matter and good teaching pedagogy, we can also learn from our students. I am genuinely interested in their pop culture, the technology

they use, and their families and communities. I think they also like to instruct their teachers. It gives them confidence and builds a special rapport.

Janet, Jeff, and Randy all need to go to the bathroom at once. Mrs. Smith only lets one boy and one girl go at a time. Randy asked first, but Jeff complains that he really needs to go. They exchange a few words, and Jeff gets irritated that Randy provokes him about needing to go. Randy leaves the classroom, but when he returns, Jeff apologizes for getting angry.

At the end of class, Zane tells us that he moved to Athens from Ohio three months ago to live with his dad. Ann shares that she's from New York, so she understands moving to the South. I tell each of them that I want to bring a special treat on Monday, since it's my last day with them. I ask what they like. Jeff wants banana pudding. Janet wants brownies and Takis in the purple bag. Anji doesn't like chocolate, so she asks for sugar cookies. Randy and Zane like anything and are happy with what the others requested. I am going to bring in all of these things!

### April 12, 2017

Wow, it's only Ann and me in class today. Before class starts, a few guys stop in to chat with her. I think that one of them is her boyfriend, but I'm not sure. I can see where she could be popular. She has such a positive outlook and a warm personality. She's nice to the guys but can also hold her own with them.

Ann tells me that she hopes someone else shows up. Jeff comes in right as the bell rings, so I decide to sit at their table today since no one else is in class.

Our Essential Question is "How do I solve for all missing sides in a right triangle?"

Ms. Jackson brings another new student to Mrs. Smith's class. His name is Zane. Mrs. Smith catches him up on the Pythagorean Theorem, sides of triangles, and trigonometric ratios. We then work several problems together as a class, and the students seem to have a hard time with the concepts. Mrs. Smith and I both spend time with the students helping them understand the opposite and adjacent sides as well as the hypotenuse. If they get these concepts down, then they just need to know the trigonometric functions that they've been using. I sit with Zane to share how I label my triangle sides first. This helps me determine which function to use when solving for a missing side. We then do a few problems together, and I think he understood.

After class, I ask Mrs. Smith how missing students catch up on the concepts and classwork. I specifically ask if she will simply reteach the concepts the next day. She tells me that she won't. The students can meet with her before school, during her planning period, or after school to get help. With so many absences, I wonder how the students catch up. Do they take advantage of the time Mrs. Smith offers or do they just try to catch up in class? It must be difficult for both the teacher and the others when so many students are absent each day. I had never really thought about the impact of absences until today. It puts pressure on students to catch up, pressure on their peers because the teacher has to review or slow down, and pressure on the teacher to make

time to re-teach concepts. I need to think about this more as I move into my teaching program in the fall.

### April 10, 2017

It's the first class after Spring Break, and the students are slowly coming into class. Ann, Jeff, Janet, Randy, and Natasha are here. I ask Janet if she worked over the break or did anything fun. She tells me that she got drunk one day. Wow! I know high school students may drink but didn't realize Janet would tell me. I'm not sure if she did it for shock value or because it's a fact. Either way, wow!

Today's Essential Question is "How do I use the given sides of a triangle to determine if it is right, acute, or obtuse?" Mrs. Smith points out that here is where Ann can use the Pythagorean Theorem. A few of them recite the theorem aloud and in unison. They seem proud that they know it. Then, they practice two worksheet problems together, with Mrs. Smith going through each step to solve the equation.

Today, I notice that Jeff carries a Hello Kitty backpack. At first, I think how cool that he's confident in himself and doesn't care that he's carrying a little girl's backpack. Then I think that it may have been the only one he could have. I tell him I like it, and he thanks me. Janet has done her hair differently. It's braided with beads scattered among a few braids. I tell her that it looks great. She smiles and thanks me. We also talk about our different nail polish colors. She doesn't like the color she picked and hopes to get it changed soon. I tell her that I like it, but I know that sometimes we pick a color and it looks different once it's on our nails. She agrees.

Today, I also notice that Janet takes a bathroom break every day in Mrs. Smith's class. These breaks are usually pretty long, and the teacher often has to step into the hallway and call Janet back to class. I know she does this to waste time. I reflect on whether she's bored, unmotivated, or apathetic to learning. She seems to grasp the math concepts fairly quickly, but there really seems to be no motivation to do well.

I talk to Mrs. Smith after class about the students. She tells me that Fred transferred out of her class. I am not surprised given his average grade, waning motivation, and dislike for Mrs. Smith. She then tells me that she's not sure what happened to Michael. Apparently, he and his parents complained to Dr. Clifford about Mrs. Smith. She had to attend a mandatory classroom management workshop in February. I am surprised because she manages her classroom well. I consider it one of her strengths. She enforces the rules (no phones, no headphones, etc.) and rarely has any behavior issues in the classroom. She seems relieved that both Fred and Michael are no longer in her class.

Before I leave, I ask if I can come on Wednesday and Friday to finish my hours before final exams begin. Again, she tells me that I'm welcome any time. I look forward to spending more time with the students this week.

### **March 20, 2017**

Class is small again today. Only Janet, Ann, and Jeff are present. Today's Essential Question is "How do I determine if 2 figures are similar?" Mrs. Smith begins with definitions and explanations. I again think that, if students understood the value of taking notes, they would have a greater chance of really understanding and retaining the concepts. Ann takes notes diligently while Jeff and Janet take notes when they focus on what Mrs. Smith is teaching.

Ann already knows the concepts. She asks about using the Pythagorean theory, and Mrs. Smith praises her but tells her that comes in a later unit. I feel as if Ann is wasting her mind and her time in this class. She always completes her work on time. She grasps new concepts quickly. I think she even commented that she had done some of this math work before transferring to Classic City. She moved from New York to Athens with her mother. She doesn't tell us why, but I am confident she has been a strong student throughout her academic career.

We complete a worksheet in class. The students seem overwhelmed (or perhaps just complaining) that they must complete every problem on the worksheet. Mrs. Smith is unfazed by their complaints. She lets them groan and work until the bell rings.

### **March 13, 2017**

The students are beginning a new unit today – Geometric Terms. There are more students in class today than I've seen in a long time – Janet, Gary, Fred, Jeff, Ann, and Randy.

Mrs. Smith instructs them to draw a three-column table in their notes. She teaches new geometric terms, then defines them, then illustrates them. She ensures the students understand the terms before she hands out a worksheet. As the students complete the worksheet, they struggle with rays and naming lines in different ways. I chime in to try to say things differently than Mrs. Smith does, hoping that the students will grasp the concepts. Some comments work; others understand what she is saying.

Today, I notice that everyone is engaged. They take notes and try the problems. Mrs. Smith's instruction takes up most of the class period, so I don't have a chance to engage with the students much. Instead, I brushed up on my geometry skills which weren't my strong suit in high school. I hope I can add value during this unit!

### **February 28, 2017**

I come into class today, and the students are surprised. I'm happy they noticed that I usually come on Mondays only. It means they are paying attention. I told them about my class cancelation and my desire to be with them again to work on quadratic equations.

We continue the transformation worksheet today. Mrs. Smith quickly reviews the color-coding, types of transformation, and the worksheet objective. When she graphs a reflection on the white board, Jeff has a “light bulb” moment. He comments that anyone could use the quadratic formula when determining how to film or take a picture of a reflection. Mrs. Smith either doesn’t understand what he says or just dismisses him. I get it and am glad he’s relating this math concept to a real-world application. It’s a moment to make that connection and recognize Jeff. Instead, Mrs. Smith thinks he’s being silly and dismisses him.

She then asks the students to complete the worksheet. I work with Fred and Janet today. Fred is still unmotivated and doesn’t really want to complete the worksheet. I try to encourage him. He is smart but doesn’t apply himself. I want him to try to work the problems, hoping to restore a little bit of self-confidence. He sits quietly and completes four of the sixteen problems. Janet seems to understand the concept and works the problems slowly. She gets distracted by Fred and doesn’t complete the worksheet.

Before class ends, Mrs. Smith gives the students a worksheet for homework. There are groans, and I realize that she doesn’t give much homework. Based on the grade sheets I saw in prior weeks, the students rarely complete the homework and submit it to her. I make a note to consider how much classwork versus homework I assign when I teach. I need to review the pros and cons of homework, the skills it could build, and its purpose before I teach my own group of students.

### **February 27, 2017**

Today’s Essential Question is “How do I identify the different transformations in a quadratic function?” Ann, Fred, Gary, Janet, and Randy are in class. I am happy to see the Hispanic students back at Classic City. Mrs. Smith takes them through a review of the standard and vertex forms of the function. Then, she defines and illustrates the three types of transformations they must learn. Her step-by-step approach is easy to follow IF the students take notes. I’m not sure they see the value in taking notes. I’ve noticed that only Ann and Natasha are note-takers. They also appear understand the work and can build on their knowledge from one lesson to the next. They also easily catch up on the concepts if they miss class on any given day.

Mrs. Smith takes them through a graphing worksheet to help them see the various transformations in graph form. We practice using the correct vocabulary and writing the proper equation and vertex form. The students use colored pencils when graphing. This is really the first time I focus on the supply caddy that sits in the center of each table. It contains pencils, pens, calculators, paper, and colored pencils. The students use those supplies rather than supplies from their backpacks. I recall having to buy school supplies for my children each year, realizing how much money it cost even when I shopped at Walmart and the Dollar Tree. Assuming these students live in a low socio-economic status, I reflect on the fact that their parents could probably not afford the list of supplies I bought each year.

Next, Mrs. Smith introduces another worksheet to help the students practice identifying transformations when given an equation. Each component in every equation is color-coded. These colors definitely make it easier for me to understand and identify the components. However, the students are confused as Mrs. Smith explains the concept. We work three problems together as a class before the period is finished. I don't have my regular Tuesday class this week, so I decide to come back again tomorrow. I ask Mrs. Smith if that would be ok with her, and she tells me I'm welcome whenever I want to come. I can't wait to follow an entire concept through from beginning to end with the students!

### **February 13, 2017**

Mrs. Smith's Essential Question is "How do I write a function in a quadratic form?" I realize that she writes an Essential Question on the white board each day and wonder why I haven't captured them in my notes until now. I don't have time to dwell on it because we all notice that there are only three students in class today – Janet, Tina, and Jeff.

A short discussion between the students and Mrs. Smith ensues because the other students have been absent quite a bit. She knows that Anji is absent because she had to go to work. Mrs. Smith asks the students if they noticed absences in their other classes, but the students had not paid attention. She then asks them, "What's going on in America?" The students don't know how to answer her question. She explains that there's been a decline in absences over the past two weeks, coinciding with Donald Trump's inauguration as the President. All of the absent students are Hispanic. Mrs. Smith explains that illegal immigrants are highlighted in the news, and she's not sure if the students and/or parents understand the implications. She also doesn't know what the parents are telling their high school children about the illegal immigrant situation.

The class then shifts their focus to the quadratic function. Mrs. Smith steps them through the relevant vocabulary, each component of the equation, and the standard form of the function. We then work problems together and graph them on the white board. The class is quiet, engaged, and participating. I think I notice that Mrs. Smith appears more patient and engaged. I wonder if her behavior correlates to the absence of Hispanics and presence of African Americans in class today. As white teachers, we focus on diversity and showing no prejudice in the classroom. It dawns on me that Mrs. Smith seems more patient and engaged because she is black and so are today's students. I don't want to believe this idea, but the longer I observe, the more convinced I am that it could be true.

### **February 6, 2017**

Today is a workday in Mrs. Smith's class. She printed the students' grade sheets and passes them out to each student. She explains that an "M" in the grade column indicates that the assignment is "missing," not completed. The students are given options to submit those missing assignments and make up any tests that they missed. Their homework grades reflect their effort and the completeness of the assignment. The progress checks are factored into their grade. She

explains that, if they do well on the unit exam, she will adjust their progress check and homework grades. Her main concern is progress in understanding the math concepts.

The students are really confused and still don't understand the codes and grades on the sheet. They ask Mrs. Smith questions, and I help some of them decipher it. Natasha realizes that she submitted some of the homework that is shown with an "M" indicator. She pulls it out of her notebook and shows the teacher. Others do the same. Mrs. Smith makes the changes in her electronic grade book as the students show her the assignments.

Fred's average grade is an 11. Yes, an 11 out of 100. He has many missing assignments and did marginally well on his progress checks. He willingly shares his grade with everyone around him, including me. I encourage him to make up the work, but he feels defeated. He doesn't believe he can make it all up in time, nor that it would make a difference in his grade. I could visibly see his motivation and engagement disappear.

As we sort through the grade issues, two new students also joined the class, Jeff and Janet. I don't know why they are in the class and hope that I can learn over time. Mrs. Smith gives them some review worksheets to complete so that she can assess their math knowledge. Both appear to know and understand the concepts. I helped Janet with a few problems, but she capably completed most of the work in class. Jeff did the same.

I watch Fred throughout class. He doesn't attempt to do anything to complete worksheets and improve his grade. He's checked out. I make a note about two things. One, I want to try to re-engage him the next time I'm here. Two, I don't think it's a good idea to inform students of their grades in a public setting. Grades should be shared privately, and given Fred's average grade but ability to do the work, I think it warranted a conversation with him.

### **January 30, 2017**

As I enter the classroom today, I decide that I'm going to greet the students each day I'm there. I want to break the ice, open up an opportunity for conversation, and get to know them as individuals. I say "Hello" and sit with Natasha again. Mrs. Smith asks me to sit with the boys today. I assume it's to help keep them focused and quiet. They smile as if they know the reason, and I eagerly take on the challenge. This is my opportunity to build a relationship, even if it is to keep an eye on them!

Mrs. Smith tells the students to work the problems she has written on the board. They are fairly quiet and seem to diligently work. About ten minutes into class, Fred asks to see Dr. Clifford and leaves the room. (I notice that Gary and Tina are absent.) When the students have finished working the problems independently, Mrs. Smith calls on each of them to help her solve the problems on the white board. They work each step, and she seems to feel comfortable that they know the fundamentals.

The boys talk to me. I learn that Michael hates math and Mrs. Smith. He wants to drop the class. Then they ask me who I voted for in the Presidential election. I tell them that I can't



discuss my political beliefs. They assume I voted for Trump. Michael then tells me that El Chapo is Fred's uncle, and that El Chapo is going to kill Donald Trump this year. They continue to push me on who I voted for.

Mrs. Smith collects homework from the students. Fred and Michael didn't do it. Natasha was absent, so Mrs. Smith give her the worksheet. Randy completed half the problems, and Anji did them all. The teacher does not seem disappointed or surprised by any of this and moves on to the next assignment. She hands out a worksheet to complete in class and asks them to work the even numbered problems. Michael does nothing and tries to distract Fred. Mrs. Smith moves him to a table where he sits alone. Fred completes his worksheet but slowly and with my encouragement. The girls and Randy work diligently. Michael still does not attempt the worksheet problems. He plays with his phone case and doodles. Phones aren't allowed to be used in the classroom, so Mrs. Smith asks for Michael's phone. We learn it's just an empty phone case.

Michael tries to pit me against Mrs. Smith. She is irritated with him but does not lose her composure. It's obvious he is trying to push her buttons. I don't engage and instead tell him that it's Mrs. Smith's class and her rules.

Bored with that discussion, Fred tells me he has autism. He says things just to see what my reaction will be. Little does he know that I raised a boy who is now in college. My son did the same things, pushing buttons, telling stories, and just trying to get a reaction. I don't buy into Fred's game, but I am consciously trying to build a relationship with him.

Even though Natasha missed Friday's class, she catches up on her work in class. Mrs. Smith presents her with the Student of the Month award. She had perfect attendance last month and completed all her work. I learn that these students get invited to a special breakfast in their honor. Natasha was unable to attend it but very proud that she was recognized.

Fred then wants the attention again. He tells me that, while he was in the bathroom passing time during class, he slipped in pee. He got a Student of the Month, but his mother tore up the certificate. She makes him cry. He says he's going to smoke a cigarette and drink a Bud Light as soon as he leaves school. Then, he pulls a throat lozenge out of his pocket and tells me it's a drug. I laugh and tell him I know what it is. He tries to convince me, and we banter back and forth until the bell rings.

When the classroom is empty, I ask Mrs. Smith about Michael. She tells me that she really doesn't know his story. She repeats the accident and settlement narrative the boys told me, but she's not sure what's true. She tells me that he's tried to provoke her in the past, so she's wary of his antics. I respect the way she handles him in class because he really could sabotage her strong classroom management and teaching the other students.

### January 23, 2017

It's my first day at Classic City High School, and I am so excited! I volunteered to tutor in math class since my background is in Finance. Ms. Mary introduces me to Mrs. Smith who welcomes

me into her classroom. Wow, the room! Students sit at tables not desks. Two walls are lined with computers, and Mrs. Smith has two whiteboards and a smart board. She has decorated the room with motivational posters and flip-chart art created by her students.

Five students attend class today. Such a small class. I wonder how many are on Mrs. Smith's role. She knows the students well and simply marks her grade book without going down her list of students. Mrs. Smith asks us to introduce ourselves for my sake, so I quickly start learning the students' names. Ann is a mixed-race female sitting alone at the front table. I am sitting with Natasha, a Hispanic girl who looks to be about five months pregnant. Fred, Michael, and Gary are a group of Hispanic males sitting at the same table.

Mrs. Smith reminds the students about a test tomorrow. She wants to review probability again to ensure they understand it for the test. As she writes problems on the white board and asks the students questions, Ann and Natasha engage in the work while the male students fidget, whisper to each other, play with their hair, and watch me. I have a twenty-one-year-old son and managed to live through his high school experience. These boys remind me of him at that age. I am not intimidated or nervous about working with them. I continue to think it will be a fun experience to interact with high school students again.

We don't have time to socialize (of course), so I quietly observe the students during the first part of class. Fred answers one of Mrs. Smith's questions in a British accent. It's actually a pretty good accent! And he answered correctly. He then plays with his hat, putting it on and taking it off. He plays with his hair, puts it in a ponytail, takes it down. The boys act silly, and Mrs. Smith tells them to focus. She wants them to write down the notes. Michael writes something. As the teacher looks at his paper, he hides what he wrote and deflects by asking her why he needs to focus.

Anji and Natasha take notes consistently. They don't let the boys distract them.

The classroom phone rings. I think, "This is something new. She has a phone in her classroom? No intercoms anymore?" Dr. Clifford asks that Gary come to his office, and Gary leaves the classroom.

Mrs. Smith finishes at the white board and looks through worksheets in her arms. These sheets are each student's prior work which she gives to them to help study. As she's doing this, Michael walks over and plays with the hand sanitizer near the door. Then, Michael wants to go to the bathroom. Mrs. Smith asks if he pulled his homework from his folder. He explains that he wasn't in class on Friday and goes to the bathroom. Mrs. Smith tells the students, "If you're going to pass this class, you need to pay attention." I pick up some tension between the two but am not sure what's driving it. I file this thought and hope to understand their relationship as I spend more time in the classroom.

I notice that Fred answers Mrs. Smith's questions and solves math problems while the other boys are out of the room. He's clearly influenced by his peers who put little effort into their classwork. When he is focused, he knows the material, provides the answers, and completes his

work. When they are sitting at the table with him, he joins in their antics and acts disinterested in academics.

When Gary returns, Mrs. Smith tells him where we are in the review. The other boys start talking to him. I think they want to know what's going on, but I can't hear them very well.

Mrs. Smith steps out of the when an adult knocks on her door. The boys tell me that it's Gary's mother. They then start talking about getting their driver's licenses. I think Michael already has his license, but Gary and Fred want to get theirs.

After the teacher steps back into the classroom, Dr. Clifford calls Mrs. Smith to the office. Before she leaves, she gives the students a worksheet that some completed on Friday. Ms. Jackson, the teacher next door, comes over to continue the review. The boys talk instead of working.

There is no major progress on the review while Mrs. Smith is away. Ms. Jackson doesn't push the students to complete their work. Instead, we talk to the students. Michael tells us that he was in a car accident a while ago. He received a settlement from the accident. He then had surgery on his face to repair damage from the accident. The surgeon left glass in his face which led to another court case and settlement. The boys tell me that Michael's rich and has lots of cars. Two boys tell us that Gary is going back to jail today. That's why he's leaving early. He broke probation. It's my first day, so I don't ask what he did. If I were more comfortable with the students, I would ask because I want to get to know them better. I want to understand what happens in their lives and how they react to those events.

I learn that Natasha is pregnant with a girl. She is pretty quiet, but the boys know her boyfriend and talk to her.

The students pack up early and leave the classroom when the bell rings. Once they leave class, Mrs. Smith returns. I ask her about the boys. She tells me that Fred is the only one who comes regularly. She isn't sure why Michael bothers to come at all because he doesn't put forth any effort and distracts the other students. I thank her for a great first day and tell her I'll be back next week.

As I head to my car and drive to Dr. Smagorinsky's class, I am inspired. The students accepted me fairly quickly and talked to me on my first day. Even though I know the boys were testing me by telling me lots of stories (true and false), at least they talked to me. I already love the environment at Classic City and can wait to spend more time there.