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Classic City High School

Option two: #4

My experience at Classic City High School was a combination of observing students and helping the teacher with specific needs such as collecting papers, passing out papers, and helping students within class assignments. I was not with one particular student. My cooperating teacher, Dr. Maudsley, used me as a class helper instead of an individual tutor. There were a few times where he assigned me to help a specific student, but that occurred unintentionally, which I will explain later in this report. Overall, I worked with the entire class. I was originally going to be put with an English class, but Mrs. Mimi asked if anyone would be willing to go to a science class because there was help needed there. I like science, therefore I was interested in going to this class, and I just wanted to be a help wherever they needed it most. I was put into an Environmental Science class for upper classroom. There was a mixture of ages in the classroom, but after talking to some of the students I found out that the majority of them were in their junior or senior year of high school. There was only one student that I knew of that was a sophomore in high school. Because the students were older, the dynamics of the class was more independent and most of the students had jobs. I was observing Dr. Maudsley's class on Monday's from 1:45-3:00. This class was at the end of the day, but attendance was regular for the most part. Anywhere between 6-12 students showed up. This was a small class to begin with, and many students were taking this as one of their last requirements for graduation. Besides being upper

classmen, there were two students who were often late to the class. They were wearing scrubs because they were taking college career classes. Dr. Maudsley was very flexible with his students and understood that they all had outside priorities. He told me on the first day of class that most of the students were there because they had to have one more science course for graduation. He said that it was a fairly behaved class and that he did not have many troubles with the students because they were older and mature. After being there for 15 weeks, I agree with Dr. Maudsley, the students were mature and behaved. Though they did not always listen and were on their phones, attendance was consistent. The remainder of this study is going to be a mixture of my personal journal entries that I made during my weeks at Classic City High School and lessons that I learned by Dr. Maudsley, the students, and faculty.

Prior to going to CCHS, I took a test drive there so that I could get familiar with the area and school. I do not live in Athens; therefore, I was not familiar with where this school was located. Thinking that I had made it to the right place, I showed up on the first day and walked in to the wrong building. I thought that the high school was the career center. The workers at the career center told me that CCHS was in the very back of the school. When I finally got to the right building, I was surprised at how small it was. I thought that it would be a much larger institution, considering that it was a public high school in Clarke County. When I walked in, and had to be clicked in by the office faculty worker. The doors were locked and would not allow people in the office without someone else unlocking the door. The woman who unlocked the doors and worked in the main office was very nice. I enjoyed talking to her every week. One week she and another working were at the front desk talking when I walked up. We were discussing our plans for spring break when one of the ladies got out of her chair and ran to get a student. The main office lady that remained, giggled and told me the students always kept them

on their toes. The conversation continued, and she told me how long she had worked there. Her advice to me was that you have to have a real passion for it to continue in this field. She looked at me and told me that it was good that I had a passion for what I was doing. I have been to many schools for observations, and this conversation will stick with me. So often, people discourage going into teaching because of the pay or difficulties in the school system. Rarely do people commend teachers for being willing to teach even if it is not the highest paying job. It was refreshing to have an adult encourage a student teacher like myself. It was a good reminder of why I have chosen this career. This conversation was memorable and will stick with me for a very long time.

Besides the faculty workers in the main office (which is to the right after entering the main doors) I saw a cop after entering the building. This cop was standing by the doors. This cop was there every week. This is a very different experience of school than I had growing up. I went to a small private school from pre-school to high school and the only time there were cops at the school were for directing traffic or if there was a football game. Having the cop at the front door was different from my experience, but reminds me of the discussion we had in class about how far schools should go to protect the students and workers. We discussed how having cops in the school can change the dynamics of learning, and whether or not teachers should be armed. Though this particular aspect of the institution was different from my experience, I did not feel that having the cops on the premise hindered the learning environment. The cop seemed very friendly and was willing to help. I think having cops on the school grounds was different for me because I never went to a public school until I attended public universities.

I did not get a good view of the high school all together. I was put into the science lab classroom which is the very first room of the school. As you walk through the main doors, Dr.

Maudsley's classroom is the first door next to the bathrooms. I did not have the chance to walk through the hallways or to other classrooms. Dr. Maudsley's classroom was set up very similar to a class that I had in high school. Since I attended a small school, the class size of Dr. Maudsley's class was not unusual to me. Dr. Maudsley's had a series of lab tables in the center of the class, in front of the smart board. These tables are almost identical to the ones that were used in my high school forensics' class. The layout was very similar to my experience in a science classroom. The only difference is that aligning the walls of the classroom were computers. The students rarely used the computers. There were a few times when the students had the choice to either work on the assigned work sheets that were handed out during class or go on google classroom to make up work. Even though the computers were not used often in my experience at CCHS, the computers were helpful for students who missed the previous class. They could go on there and catch up while still being present in the class. One specific time that Dr. Maudsley used the computers was to help students get caught up on a movie they missed watching in class. There were only 3 headphone sets that went with the computers. Only 3-4 students needed the headphones, but there were roughly 20 computers in the classroom, and only 3-4 headphones for them all. It is possible that the headphones were located somewhere else, but they were not in the classroom where students would use them.

The instruction of the class was usually presented through video, the smart board, and worksheets. I really enjoyed Dr. Maudsley's power point notes. They were clear, and easy enough to follow. Many of his notes were color coated, which helped visualize the important facts of the notes. Dr. Maudsley used a lot of scientific movies to help students understand the material. I thought that this was a great way to keep the students engaged, but still learn about the environment. I was never there to watch a movie with the students, I was always there the

Monday after they watched the movie to discuss how it related to their class. The learning environment of this classroom was a mixture of lectures, note taking, doing worksheets, and watching short films. Dr. Maudsley informed me that they went outside often for experimentation, but I was never there when they did those experiments. A speaker from a university came to talk to the students at one point during this semester. I was not there, but Dr. Maudsley always gave me a rundown of the past and upcoming week. Over all, this class had multiple means of instruction in the classroom.. Dr. Maudsley would intentionally speak of college in his instruction. Such as, “you might want to take these notes because this is how college will be.” He told many stories of himself, and spoke of his college years often. It seemed to me, that his subtle comments about college were his way of helping them when they graduate since most of them were upper classmen.

I am not sure how many students plan on going to college but there were two girls who sat near me every week. Towards the end of the semester they opened up to me about their prom and asked advice on homework, but that took many weeks before we got to that point. These girls early on during my time at CCHS, talked about how excited they were about the meal plans in college. Dr. Maudsley was instructing and they were not paying attention one day, but I was excited that they were talking about college. Those girls and one boy asked me questions about UGA, and my experience in college. I was happy to talk to them about it, and it was encouraging to me. I was not sure how many planned to go to college, since the first day of class when we met Mrs. Mimi she talked about how difficult it was to get the students to apply for dual enrollment classes. I was not sure how many of the students would be interested in college, but these two girls talked about it a lot and were involved in career classes.

Now that I have given an overview of the dynamics of the institution and the classroom that I was in, I am going to include notes that I took throughout the semester. Some days Dr. Maudsley had me involved with the lesson, therefore I could not take notes but I still have a set of notes that I collected throughout the semester that help summarize my experience at CCHS.

January 29, 2018

On this day, the students had just finished watching the movie *After Earth*. They were learning about adaptation. They were going over the dynamics of the ecosystem and watched two short videos about the population. The focus was on predators and prey and how that effected the population. Dr. Maudsley offered an extra credit assignment that went with the movie. He did not require students to do it, but was offering a substantial amount of extra credit for the text test. The majority of the students did not take him up on the extra credit assignment. It involved writing and most of the students were on their phones. Dr. Maudsley then continued to encourage the students to do the extra credit. Finally, a few did turn it in, but not many. I was a little surprised that not more students took him on this opportunity since he had just reviewed the answers to the extra credit assignment. I found out later through responses from the students that many of them were only interested in what had to be done for the class and were not interested in extra credit. Comments such as, "Is this for a grade" or "I just want the work that I have to do" were made. On a side note, I was not introduced to the students when I first arrived. I just sat by Dr. Maudsley's desk and observed for the first few visits.. I prepared paper and pens, and took notes about the content of the class. I am used to English classes so I felt the need to take notes on the content so if a student needed help I could help them. The science lessons each week were simplistic but memorable. I thought that Dr. Maudsley did a great job at repeating important information and using visuals that reestablished the material being taught. The first

few visits I just took notes. I felt like an outsider in the classroom. I did not want to come across as just taking notes about the class. To me, that seems impersonal and no one wants to feel as though they are being watched or judged. After the first visit, I started introducing myself to the students just so they knew who I was. I wanted to learn the names of the students, so I paid attention to rollcall or asked the students when I was passing out papers.

February 5th or 12th- (I copied the date wrong in my journal)

Even though I copied the dates wrong in my journal, this was one of the most memorable days for me. I walked into the room and it smelled like smoke. The smell was overwhelming, and I am very sensitive to strong smells. I am prone to getting headaches and migraines, so the smell impacted my visit. As well as the smell being harsh, I noticed that the students were chattier than usual. Most of the time, the students walked in quietly or were on their phones. This time most of the students were not paying attention to Dr. Maudsley. Dr. Maudsley was trying to get a game started for the class to play, but a couple of the students were on the phone in the middle of the class. Other students from other classes were dropping by. The class was super hyper and talkative which changed the atmosphere of the classroom. Though the class was more talkative than usual, more students did show up to class. The students got to choose whether or not they played the game, but as Dr. Maudsley was trying to get the instructions out, a girl from the back sassied him and said that she hated him for making them work while another student just wanted the work he missed when he was absent. The student that was absent interrupted Dr. Maudsley so that he could get the work that he missed. Dr. Maudsley then tried to get him to wait until after class. The student did not want to wait and started raising his voice at Dr. Maudsley. I noted that it appeared as though this student just wanted the work and not the learning experience, but Dr. Maudsley was very patient throughout the mishap.

Finally, the student got his work. After that, the girl in the back who was talking on the phone said, "I don't feel like going to work today, F---." This stood out to me because I realized then how much some of the students were having to deal with outside of school. Having to go to school and then work is not easy. After talking to some kids, some of them don't get home until really late. Going back to the point that I made, about "the student just wanted the work and not the learning experience," I realized that when it can make coming to school very difficult when the students have so many outside responsibilities. At the end of the day, working is what makes them money. School is a place that they are forced to go, and who knows whether they will ever be able to see the benefits of the education system. In one of the books I read for this class called, *Closing the Opportunity Gap*, I learned how students may be failed by the education system. What can we do as educators to help students with limited materials and funds? I think the small classroom environment helps because students can have a more intimate learning experience and build relationships with the teachers. Also, we have discussed in class how principals have the ability to be flexible with working students. By opening that opportunity for students who work to have a different schedule, could allow them to have a better learning experience.

The last note that I took on this day, was when a girl who is typically very quiet and completes her work was called out. I think she was talking or getting a little off task. Dr. Maudsley called her out, but I thought it was ironic that he did not call out the students who were on the phone or refusing to do what he had instructed. I think that this student moved to another class or completed all the work, After the first few weeks, I did not see her again. I think that this note goes back to the idea of knowing your students and how to handle them based on their needs and personalities. This student did not seem to care at all that Dr. Maudsley asked her to get back on task. He was not rude at all, but he did deal with this student differently than the

others who had been off task earlier. Each student is different and needs to be dealt with differently, and I saw that in the classroom.

February 26, 2018

On this day, the students were learning about Man's Interference. I noted that Dr. Maudsley would get on their level with his speech. He made instruction and explanations very clear which made it easy for me and the students to understand. The room again smelled like smoke. This time it was a little worse and I got a headache. Only three students were not on their phones, and I was just sitting there. Dr. Maudsley did not need me at the moment, so I just observed the classroom. The two girls who usually sat next to me were talking about money. Dr. Maudsley was using PowerPoint and videos for instruction. He showed a cool clip of a Komoto Dragon which got the students engaged. There was a girl on her phone, but she did end up participating later and she got the answer right that Dr. Maudsley asked. (I wrote in my journal; "She got it right! I was proud of her because she did not usually participate in class.) Again, Dr. Maudsley used a lot of personal stories as associations for the material being learned. Towards the end of the class, there was a time where every kid was looking at their phone. Dr. Maudsley was impressed on this day because there was perfect attendance. Small moments are important, and I think that the student answering the question right was a big deal! She hesitated at first, but got it right. Later on in the semester, this student was working on a writing worksheet. She thought she had done it wrong, but when I looked at it I thought it looked fine. I helped restructure some key points, but overall she did a great job. I think that this particular student just needed a bit of a push. She knew more than she gave herself credit.

March 19, 2018

I took notes a little bit differently on this day. This class period instruction forced the class to take notes. Dr. Maudsley encouraged them to take notes at the beginning of the class, but not many began writing notes until later in the class period. Dr. Maudsley used the smartboard and took notes with them. Instead of showing a PowerPoint with premade slides he wrote the notes with them. I thought that this was a good strategy so that the students could have multiple means of instruction. In the last book my group read called, *Strategies for Students with Disabilities*, reveals the importance of having different modes of note taking instruction. Dr. Maudsley was using colored markers, he was speaking aloud as he was writing, and he was sharing stories throughout the instruction. He used mnemonics. The lecture was organic, and he talked about college to help reengage students. At one point of the discussion Dr. Maudsley asked the class, "Does anyone have a computer at home?" No one in the class said they had a computer at home, so Dr. Maudsley quickly diverted his analogy by using televisions instead. The class continued, but I was shocked that none of the students had computers at their houses. I thought it was smart of Dr. Maudsley to not assume that the students had computers. I am not sure if I had been teaching, if I would have thought to ask. This was a learning moment for me that I will take with me beyond this semester. It also occurred to me that if these students do not have computers at home that means they are limited in what they can do outside the classroom. This semester, I was also doing field work at Malcom Bridge Middle School. The students relied on their home computers for many of their assignments. Not having one, limits your ability to do research or make college or job applications outside the school. This fact made me think of our discussions, and how important it is to assign work that students have the ability and resources to complete and succeed at.

The rest of my notes from this day were what Dr. Maudsley was putting on the smart board. I noticed that when I started taking the notes the two girls beside me started taking notes. If they could not understand Dr. Maudsley's handwriting they would ask me. I ended up giving one of the girls my blue felt pen because she liked it while taking notes. Doing the work beside them, seemed to be helpful and pushed them to catch up even when they were behind. They saw that I was struggling to get everything down and it was funny but also showed them that I am with them and not above them.

March 26, 2018

On this day, the class was much smaller. Not everyone showed up, and there was a good bit of chatter in the back. Phones were going off and there were outbursts from the back of the class. Even though there were many disruptions, Dr. Maudsley continued to talk to them. He was repetitive in his lecture, which I thought was good for comprehension. He would remind them of old lessons they had learned and combined it with the new ones so they would not forget what they learned the previous week.

April 23, 2018

When I first got to the class, no girls showed up to class. Six students were in the class, and one of them was outside the door taking a phone call. Every student was on their phone except one. They were learning about turbines and tidal dams. Dr. Maudsley drew lots of pictures so that they had visuals with their notes. There was only one student who I saw taking notes, but there were two boys in the front who were participating through conversing with Dr. Maudsley. The student who was on the phone outside was not coming in so Dr. Maudsley asked him to come in because he did not want to have to count him absent. The student slowly came in, but did not raise his voice. I thought that this was interesting because this student is the one who

earlier in the semester raised his voice at Dr. Maudsley for not giving him his absent work immediately. There was a change in his response this time, which shows how students may have off days and need to be given more patience. Looking back over the semester, Dr. Maudsley never raised his voice at the students. He continually showed patience and supplied their needs with flexibility depending on their circumstances. On this particular day, many of the students were not paying attention. They were on their phones for the most part, but there were not outbreaks or defiance demonstrated by the students.

Memorable Moments-

Due to the nature of the class, some days I was observing in the back and able to write in my journal. Other days I was helping out with instruction or helping students independently so I was unable to write in my journal, but there are some memorable moments that I would like to mention to close my thoughts and experiences at Classic City High School. As I stated in the first paragraph, Dr. Maudsley partnered me with a student who I will call John as a pseudonym. John was not my original partner, but one day Dr. Maudsley allowed students to work independently on their final projects that are due in May. I went around the classroom and asked if anyone needed help, but most of them said they were fine. Dr. Maudsley then suggested that I work with John for the remaining time. I sat beside him at his computer and asked him which project he was doing. He told me which one, but was not too thrilled about getting started on it. Because he did not want to work, I asked him some questions about school in general. He told me that he had missed a month of school due to a family emergency. He had to leave the state, and missed a lot of school. I then told him about how when I was his age, I got a TBI from a concussion and also missed a month of school. I sympathized with him, because I know that trying to redo a month's worth of school work in a short amount of time can feel impossible and extremely

overwhelming. I encouraged him to keep going, because I believed that he would be able to do it. It was then that he started logging in to his computer to start working on his final project. After we talked about him missing school, I asked him if he had a job. He said that he had two jobs, and then told me about an event that recently happened at work that upset him. He said that someone disrespected him, and it made him mad. He told me that if, “You respect me, then I respect you.” He said that the person at his work did not respect him. I’m not exactly sure what he did in his anger, but he continually told me that he did not want to be like “that” anymore. In the past his anger has gotten the best of him and he does not like that version of himself. He told me that he liked his second job better which involved types of gardening and landscaping. He likes being outside and working with his hands. I told him how wonderful I thought it was that he could work with his hands. I told him that my mom was a great seamstress and I wanted to learn because I think it’s becoming a lost art. He told me his grandmother sewed and made him stuff.

The conversation continued to explode all while he was working on his final project. He told me how much he hated English. He said that he liked science because there were facts and it was easy to understand. In English they were reading *Beowulf*. I told him that *Beowulf* was hard for everyone and that his frustration made sense. This part of our conversation connected me to my reading in *Boys Will Be Boys*. This author states that boys tend to like texts that are more factual over emotional. The things that John was complaining about were complains that were mentioned from other guys in *Boys Will Be Boys*. As John wrote facts, I would help him understand the academic text, but he was doing a good job at comprehending the text even without me. Our last topic of conversation ended up with me telling him a little bit about my personal life and my college experience. Before we were done, the bell had rung but we were

still working. John logged off his computer and was smiling. He went up to Dr. Maudsley and asked for advice which is rare because he does not usually participate in class. He is the student that raised his voice at Dr. Maudsley for wanting his absent work. Ever since that day, Dr. Maudsley would partner me with him if needed. I asked him about work, and I would tell him that I hope work goes well for him that night. That was my favorite day at CCHS. I felt like I actually was able to help this student, and in return he helped me. Because of him, I tried to talk to other students like that. I found out that most of the students left school to go straight to work. The two girls beside me would talk to me and show me pictures of their prom dresses. It changed my perspective of the classroom and the students.

My experience at Classic City High School helped me grow as an educator. Dr. Maudsley taught me a lot, and though I was not in an English class I was still able to learn valuable lessons. I learned that you have to be aware of your students needs at all times, and that your assignments should be given so that the students can complete them with the resources that they have in class. I learned that talking to students goes a long way, and that respect is needed both ways in the classroom. I am going to miss going to Classic City High School. April 30th is my last day. I have gotten permission to make cookies and brownies for Dr. Maudsley's class. I want to celebrate their accomplishments over the past semester, especially since some of them will be graduating soon. Dr. Maudsley is proud of his students and has openly told me that. I am proud of them too. Even though I was only there one day a week, and did not get to experience every aspect of the classroom management or curriculum, the time I had helped me make connections with the three books I read this semester: *Boys Will Be Boys* by Linda Bausch, *Closing the Opportunity Gap* by Carter Prudence and Kevin Welner, and *Strategies for Teaching Students*

with Disabilities by Lucy Martin. I also made connections through the diverse discussions in class.

I am not sure where my education career will take me, but from the beginning of college my interests have always been on how to help students who attend non-tradition high schools or need extra support due to their living conditions. I was excited to come to Classic City because it gave me the experience that I have been craving.

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