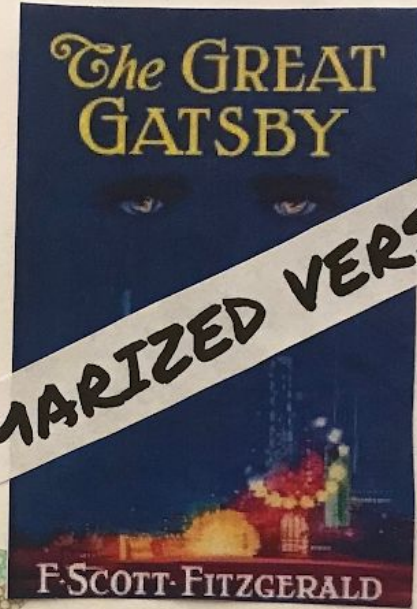
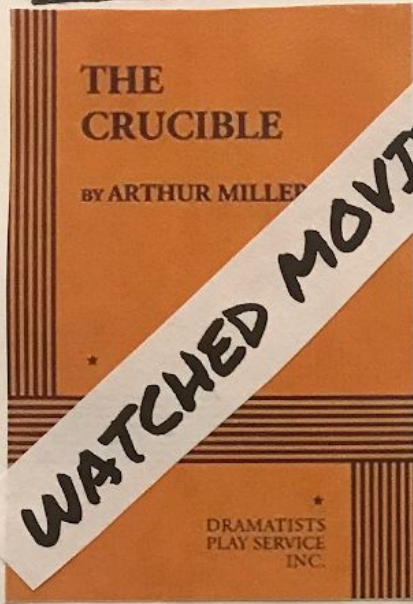
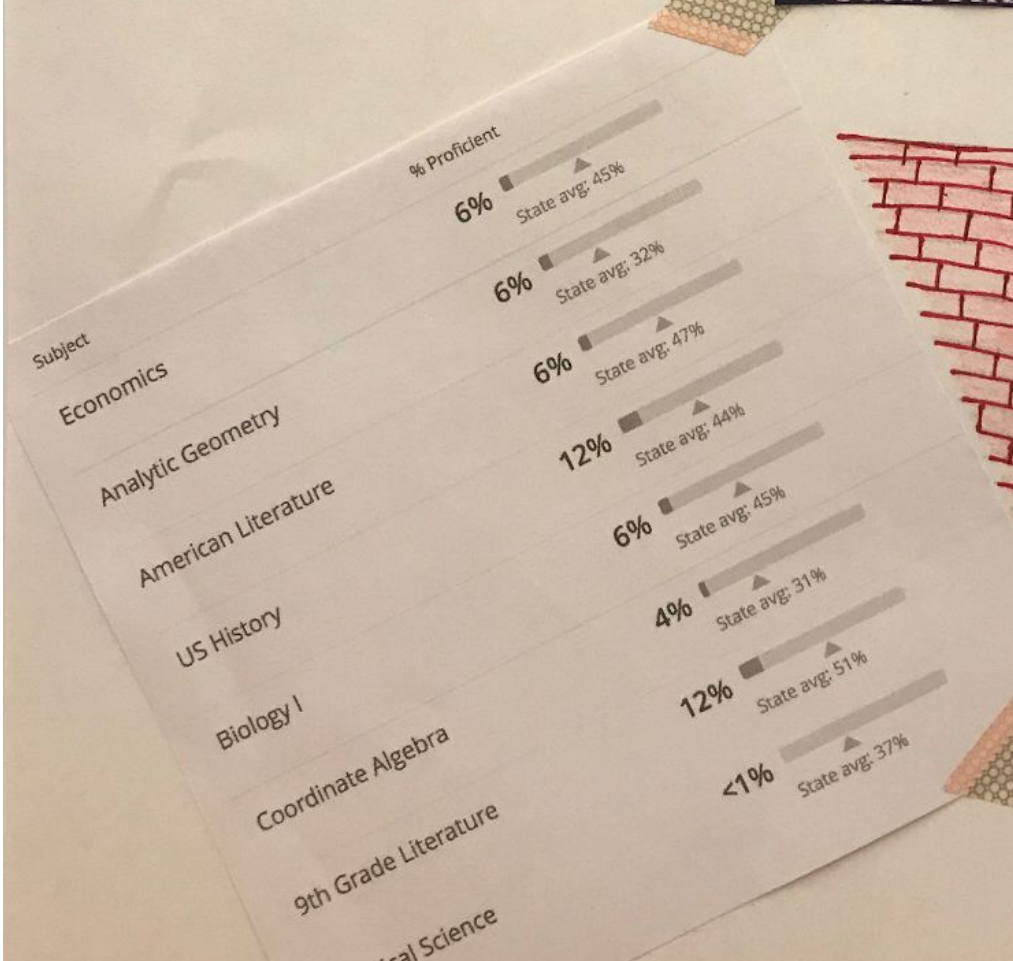
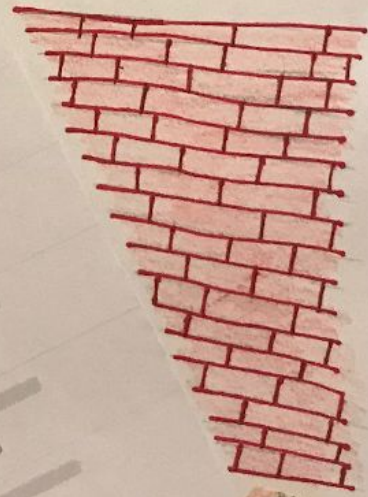


INSTITUTION



ELACC11-12RL9: Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.



Shelby Parker

Professor Smagorinsky

LLED3461S

29 April 2019

Institution

Classic City High School definitely has a different structure and institution behind the scenes than I would have imagined for a Title I alternative school in the Athens-Clarke county school district. When I first started tutoring in the classrooms, I was impressed with the small class size and the individual attention I assumed each student would then be receiving. Further, since I was in an English class, I thought that the book discussions these students and the teacher would engage in would be more meaningful and beneficial than even my own high school English class discussions. But after the very first day of class, I realized that my hopeful assumptions were very wrong. On my first day of tutoring, there was no teacher. Just a substitute sitting in the corner reading a book. The students were tasked with reviewing parts of speech rules and then taking a quiz on their own. One might think “oh that isn’t so bad! I had substitutes all the time in my educational career and it was fine!” But that was not the case here. The teacher, Mrs. Kaiser, was on long-term leave and it was unclear when she would be returning. The school then hired a substitute teacher to basically make sure the students stayed in the classroom and the school counselor (and overall school hero) Mrs. Hamilton was tasked with making sure these students actually learned something.

Regarding the curriculum, I was horrified at the modifications Mrs. Kaiser made to “help” these students. The books they read were either summarized (like with *The Great Gatsby*

in which they read the SparkNotes rendition off of the board) or they watched the movie version (like with *The Crucible* in which they read act I and then watched the movie to understand the plot for the rest of the play). As a future educator who understands the valuable importance of reading and reading the assigned (even if it is challenging) text, this astounded me. These students were in American or British literature classes and were not reading. Past this, the structure of the class was very monotonous. Everyday, the students would do a warmup on the board, the teacher would give a brief introduction of a grammar rule or narrative word, the students would do a printed assignment or answer questions from the textbook, and then they would be tested with a paper quiz or an online essay assessment. Teaching in this environment relied heavily on routine and no participation from the students. The students, if even awake, were barely cognisant of the teacher and they, understandably, would not want to do the work. If I was in their situation, I would not want to pay attention either because the teacher did not actively attempt to engage with the students or change the teaching techniques to fit the individual learning requirements needed.

At my high school, while it was very traditional in the sense of larger class sizes and a reliance more on conservative learning techniques (physical books instead of computers, assessment being mostly test-based and not performance-based, etc.), my teachers seemed to engage with the students academically wise than what I have seen with Classic City High School teachers. To be fair, however, I went to Jefferson High School which promotes AP and honors classes, so I was with the “better” teachers and I was provided with more academic resources. Thus, I have a very biased perspective on schooling.

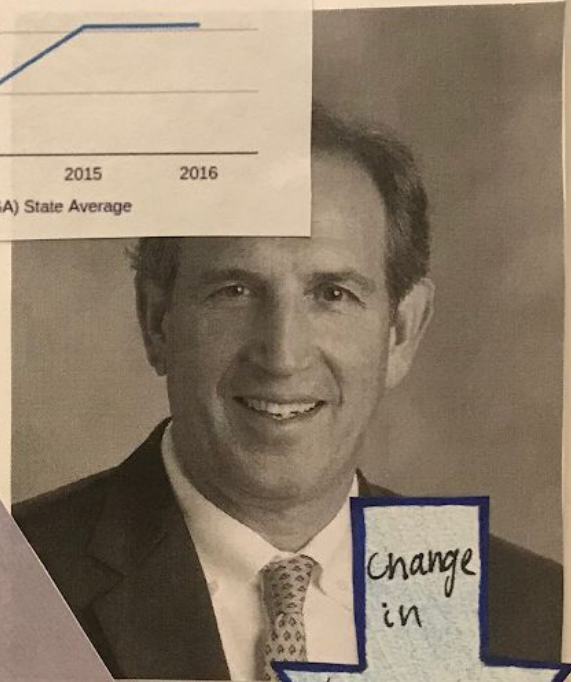
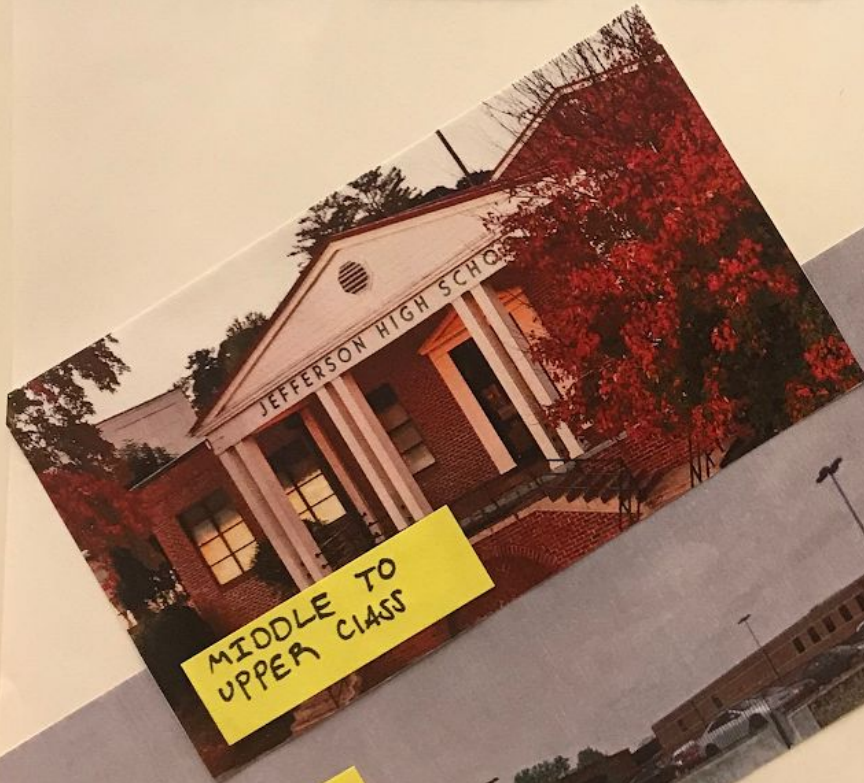
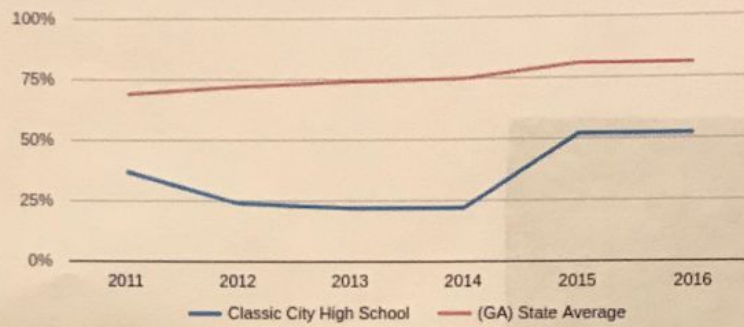
For the students that came to school everyday, were not punished because of their behaviors, and engaged with the teacher during class, these students did well in the school structure Classic City High School has. Technology and independent learning worked well for motivated and focused students, especially in classrooms with less students. On the other hand, students who missed class or did not pay attention during school hours, suffered greatly. These students were tasked everyday with completing makeup work in a never ending cycle that seemed to produce students who were always a couple steps behind the rest. They were outcasted in the class because they had to do their learning by themselves in the corner, while the rest of the class moved on to the next topic. Plus, in my opinion, I do not think technology helped them in their academic achievement at all. These students never wrote a physical essay. Instead, they wrote a couple of paragraphs down on the computer and never received feedback on that work. They also did creative projects using PowerPoint to present the different time periods of literature, but they learned nothing. They simply Googled the answers on the provided rubric and copied what their sources said. Further, when presenting this information to the class, no one listened and they were not taught good presentation skills.

TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATION

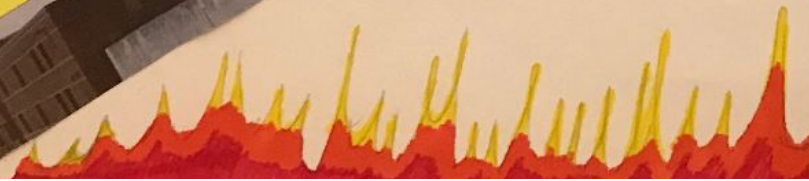
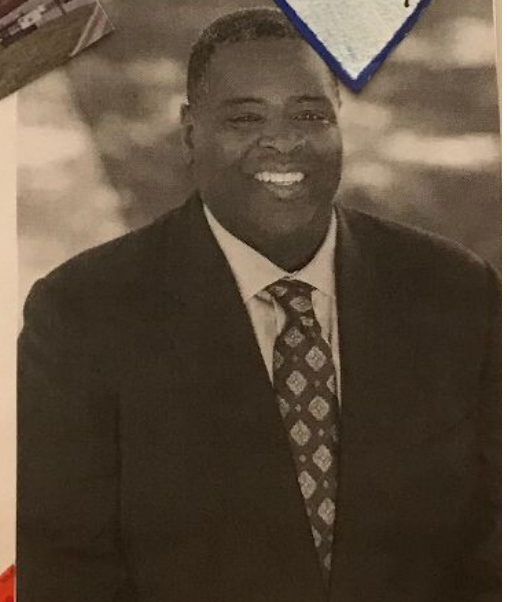
Graduation Rate

50-54%

81%



change in leadership



Administration and Teachers

My interaction with the faculty and staff of Classic City High School are probably different to that of my peers who tutored in Ms. Jones' room. In Mrs. Kaiser's class, I only engaged with the official English educator a couple of times. For the rest of the time, I worked with Mrs. Hamilton as my primary source of teaching at this high school. I have nothing but positive things to say about the staff, especially Mrs. Hamilton, of CCHS. However, my interactions with Mrs. Kaiser were not as overwhelmingly positive. From what I witnessed, her decision to rely on consistent and never-changing direct instruction (and a bit of required technology use) was not what I thought these students needed. The students were obviously bored and struggled to find the passion to learn when the teacher provided nothing but monotonous and semi-unpleasant teaching practices. My biggest concern with the teaching in this class revolved around assessments. Here, students were only graded on quiz and test scores and daily activity participation. While all of these grades seem nice in theory, they are utterly pointless when the students never show improvement. For example, the students were learning about how to match subjects to verbs and they took a quiz on their knowledge after they were taught the material and practiced a couple times. They even played a review game before the quiz and it was very evident that these students were not ready to be assessed on the topic. They were given the quiz anyways. Once Mrs. Kaiser was grading the test, all of the students failed it. Every single student made many mistakes and it was clear that they did not know this material at all. But instead of reteaching the topic (as I assumed Mrs. Kaiser would do if her students don't understand a state mandated standard), she simply moved on to the next topic. In my opinion, this lack of knowledge did not fall onto the students anymore-- this was on the teacher to reteach

before moving on. To clarify, I hope it does not sound like I am tearing Mrs. Kaiser apart. She is the certified educator with more experience than I have and this is her classroom to make decisions in. I just had some moral issues with the idea of not helping students when they have clearly shown that they need more assistance.

Unfortunately, this was one of the last times I interacted with Mrs. Kaiser. She was fired shortly after returning from her extended leave. I am not sure what happened or why she was fired, but I think it was an important part of my experience at Classic City High School and I definitely learned a lot about the more administrative and business side of the school. While I wish that the students had a constant teacher to support them, I am glad I stayed in that classroom while Mrs. Hamilton took over because I had no idea what happens in situations such as these.

Mrs. Hamilton, on the other hand, is an invaluable resource for CCHS and I can safely say that this high school would not run as smoothly as it does without her help. She knows all of the students at this schools and tries to connect with them to give them resources and support they surely need. Mrs. Hamilton cannot keep students in school if they do not want to be there, but she definitely toes the line between the best friend figure and the mother figure in this school. The students love her. The faculty and staff love her. She is the glue of the high school. My high school had counselors, but they never performed the roles that Mrs. Hamilton needed. My counselors created schedules and distinctly told me that I would not be able to get into UGA. Mrs. Hamilton instead shows the students nothing but love and support (and sometimes sass when they sass her) and you can tell she tries to do everything she can to help these students succeed.

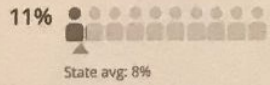
This shows the out-of-school **suspension rates** across different races/ethnicities at this school compared to the state average. High suspension rates mean less time for teaching and learning.



Parent tip

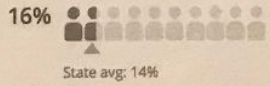
See how some schools are using innovative approaches to improve discipline and attendance.

All students



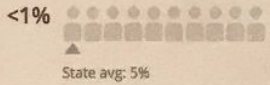
Black

(64% of students)



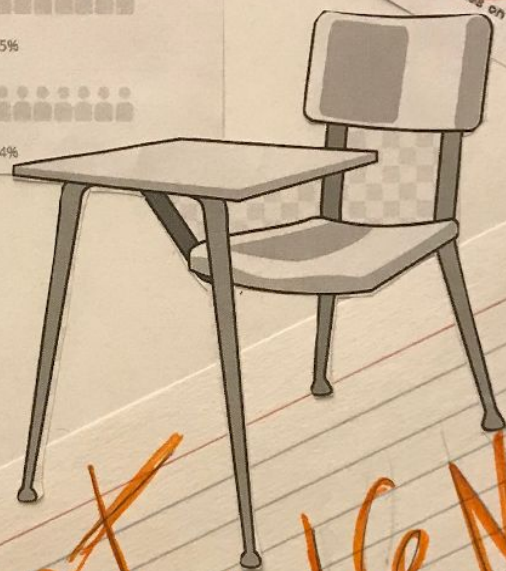
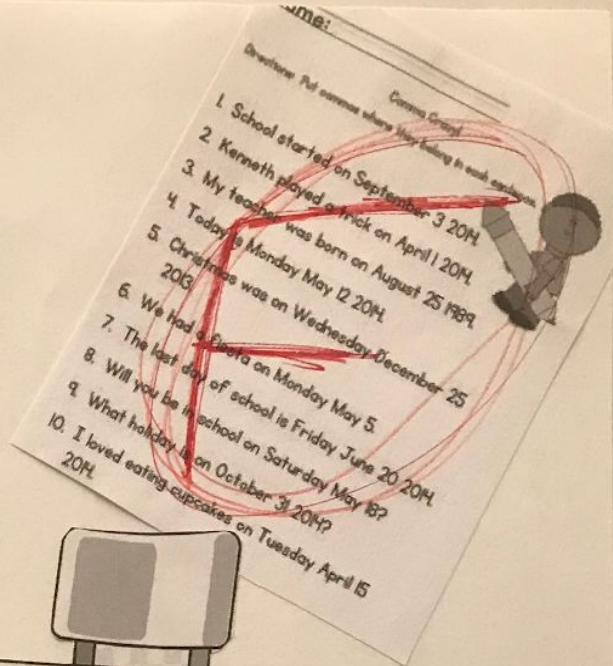
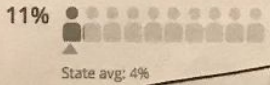
Hispanic

(18% of students)

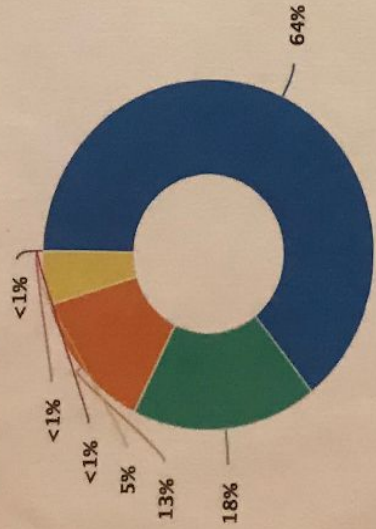


White

(13% of students)



STUDENTS



Economically Disadvantaged Students

These are the percentages of the school's students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, based on data reported to the government.

Free Lunch program (% of total)	92%
Reduced-Price Lunch Program (% of total)	0%
Total Economically Disadvantaged (% of total)	92%

Students

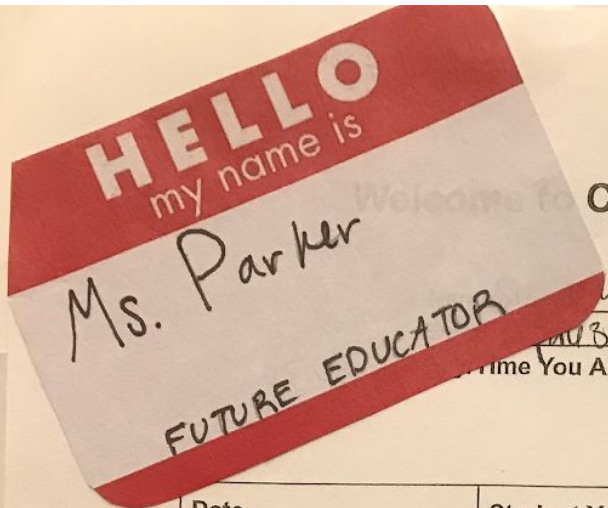
During my time at Classic City High School, I did not work specifically with one student, but I interacted with some students more than others. I usually worked with the students who needed help with makeup work or the students who I have mentored during Girls Grow (an afterschool organization I am also in where college females mentor high school females on topics that were never discussed when we were in high school). For this report, I am going to focus on the students I helped with their makeup work, as these are the students that I served as both a tutor and a mentor, not just as a mentor.

Personality wise, the students I worked with were very sweet and playful, they were just not excited, understandably, to do their makeup classwork. They were interested in getting good grades in the class and graduating high school soon, but being forced to do work that they didn't see any real purpose in was not on interest to them. They were so respectful and loved getting help-- this contrasts with my personality because it takes a lot of courage for me to admit that I need help. I really liked this about the students, as they were not afraid of anything and they really set their minds up to succeed in the class.

Culturally, the students I worked with were mostly male with a lower SES status and either black or hispanic (at least from what I saw on the outside, as one cannot correctly guess someone's ethnicity or race just by looking at them). These factors, specifically the financial status factor, really impacted how the students view the world and, on a smaller level, how the students view school as an institution. Every student I talked to had a job outside of just being a student. As soon as the school bell rang, they went straight to work and spent their valuable weekends at the local fast food restaurant working long shifts for minimum wage. Because of

this, these students saw the “real” working world and didn’t see the specific need of getting a good GPA in high school or having perfect attendance. My culture is from a white, middle-to-upper class background, so my privilege is very evident. I did not have to work a job in high school because my parents had jobs that paid the bills. Because of this, my view of school was very different. I wanted to graduate high school not because I would have been the first person in my family to do so (like many of the CCHS students), but because I had to graduate high school to go to college. I have always loved learning and put a lot of energy into school. But I also know that I had the privilege to do so because I had ample learning time and my parents were supportive of my education.

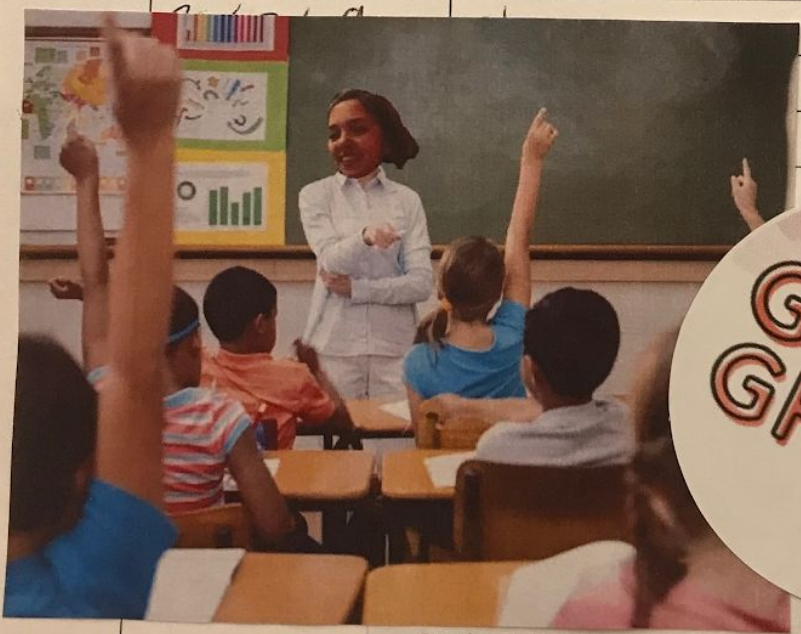
Regarding education, these students really struggled to find excitement through school in a system that has not set them up on the right track. These students have been taken from their “home school” because of academic, personal, or behavioral issues and have been put into a small setting where no one really befriends each other. Then, they have to be in charge of their academic progress on their own and work independently towards their graduation date. The students, while very respectful, do not connect with the teachers. Mrs. Kaiser, a white and presumably middle class woman, does not look like her students, nor act like them. Further, when teachers pair these students up for group work, no educational progress is made because they get off topic easily or do not work well together (there is a lot of friend drama at this high school). The students do not understand why they need to know certain aspects of the English subject because they have not been shown any real life applications. Instead, they are shown books from old, white, and middle class men and they are then expected to engage and enjoy these novels that serve no valuable purpose to their everyday lives.



Classic City High School!

Ms. Parker
 Email: msparker@vga.edu
 Time You Are Working: Friday / Monday Mornings

Date	Student You Worked With	Time
4/1/19	class	9:14 - 10:32
1/4/19	class	9:14 - 10:36
2/25/19	class	9:15 - 10:36
3/1/19	class	9:13 - 10:42
		11:58 - 3:23
		10:54 - 3:30
		1:42 - 3:30



Students per teacher	15:1	State avg: 17:1
Students per counselor	132:1	State avg: 536:1
Percentage of teachers with 3 or more years experience	100%	State avg: 94%
% of full time teachers who are certified	100%	State avg: 98%
Average teacher salary	\$44,243	State avg: \$53,251

Myself as a Future Teacher

As a mentor, I think I reached the students at some level, but it was really only at the surface level. I think the biggest way I reached these students was by connecting with them and sort of bridging the gap between teachers and students a little bit. I was very honest with the students and when they said that didn't want to do a certain assignment, I walked down to their level and said "I understand why you do not want to do this and I know school assignments suck sometimes, but this is important practice in order to do well on your standardized test at the end of the semester."

As a tutor, I really didn't make that much general progress. During individual moments, I helped students accomplish their assignments, but I honestly do not think my tutor skills have improved that much. I think on some levels, these students benefited from me as their tutor in terms of accomplishing important assessments they needed to finish to pass the class. But because I didn't grow super close to a large majority of the class, my role as a tutor and as a mentor never really clashed.

CCHS has definitely impacted me as a future educator. On a business level, I now understand how schools function the way they do and how individuals (like Mrs. Hamilton) step up to the plate when situations occur in schools. On a more personal level, I learned a lot about how to be a more empathetic and comforting educator. Instead of assuming that the students are lazy or uninterested, I know to look out for other signs in their personal lives like their family relations and their job commitments. While I understand that these times in Classic City High School have not been the most positive and lighthearted situations, the realities I now know from this experience is just as beneficial as working with an outstanding and inspiring teacher.

Book Discussions

Regarding the first book my group read, *The Bully Society* by Jessie Klein, there were some instances of tension between students, but I saw this more when I was serving as a mentor with the after school program Girls Grow. Because of the way students are placed into Classic City High School from their previous “home” schools, there is a lot of drama. These students don’t seem to trust each other and the social environment is more independent based and, at times, hostile. However, while *The Bully Society* focuses on the “gender police” idea in that bullies are perpetuated through gender differences, CCHS tends to focus more on “home” school rivalries and not trusting each other. In general, I think this novel helped me understand how and why students have tension in school and how adults unknowingly perpetuate the “gender police.”

Our second book, *Misunderstanding Families: Learning from Real Families in Our Schools* by Monica Miller Marsh and Tammy Turner-Vorbeck, helped me understand how families can impact the curriculum and school system, or in CCHS’ case, how the school can totally disregard familial input. I never heard any discussion of including family members in the school or the students’ lives during my time at Classic City High School. However, I know these students come from generally broken family structures, so the school relies more on the students when they turn 18.

Finally, the third book we read, *An Unquiet Mind* by Kay Redfield Jamison, honestly did not help me that much during my CCHS experience. I think that this book, which focused around manic-depressive disorder and mental health in general, helped me in my personal life and sanity more than furthering my teaching skills. And yet, how could I hope to be a good influence and teacher for students if I am not sound and secure myself? So while there were no concrete examples of *An Unquiet Mind* in my tutoring life, in my personal life, I feel much more

confident about sharing my mental health experiences with others, including future students, because of this book.

Links for the graphs and charts:

https://www.greatschools.org/georgia/athens/3032-Classic-City-High-School/#Race_ethnicity*Test_scores

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/georgia/districts/clarke-county/classic-city-high-school-5781>

<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/classic-city-high-school-profile>