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Professor B-C
Reflective Journal

Throughout my time at Eisenhower High School, I have learned a significant amount about how a proper class is run, how to discipline various types of students, and how to deal with diversity within the classroom. My cooperating teacher has been extremely generous and has explained practically every lesson to me in detail, including what strategies she is using, and why she chose the lessons that she did. This, along with my newfound knowledge about disciplining and managing students in my classroom, has been an extremely rewarding experience and I am better suited to teach because of my active involvement in this class.

Proper classroom management is an absolute essential when first entering into a classroom setting. If the teacher fails to instigate the right mindset among the students, they will typically act up and very little (if any) forward motion will be gained. Throughout my time in Miss Olszewski's classroom, I have learned this extremely well. Even within her AP European History class, these students (which are typically *always* well-behaved) will become unruly if Miss Olszewski does not get them in "learning mode" right away. I have noticed throughout my time there that, if she sets the proper tone for the class early on in the period, she can then have fun with the students after or during the class period. The students learn best when they can have fun at the same time, but if Miss Olszewski begins the class in a fun and fancy-free manner, the students get the idea that they do not need to work, but can have fun the entire period instead. This is an extremely difficult and dangerous position to be in. On the one hand, if students are not allowed to have fun because the teacher makes them work constantly, they will

develop a negative outlook on school and the one subject in particular. On the other hand, if there is no structure and the students are allowed to get up and talk whenever they want, they will not be productive and will learn practically nothing from the class except to maybe enhance their social skills. Miss Olszewski typically does a good job at beginning the class with the proper mindset, then giving them some slack during the period itself. That way, they know that they need to learn, but they can still have fun at the same time.

Throughout my time teacher aiding this semester, I have picked up on several different ways that Miss Olszewski disciplines different types of students. In her classes there are typically four different types of students that seem to group together (some of these students belong to more than one group). They are the low-socioeconomic group, the Middle Class, the uncaring group, and the students that genuinely try to do well in school. Miss Olszewski works with each one of these groups differently in such a way that they will be as efficient as possible in her class. The first group and the third group (low socioeconomic and uncaring) are extremely similar, and so they will both be temporarily combined into one category. These groups typically uses less-than formal English, and tend to be more disorderly than some of the other groups. While some may stereotype this group as dominantly African American, this is not the case in Miss Olszewski's class. In fact, there are African Americans, Spanish Americans, and European Americans all falling into this group, and Miss Olszewski deals with them typically in the same manner. She has to deal with the issue of "coolness" with this group the most because for many, it is how they are viewed among their peers, and it is often the only thing that they have to offer. For this reason, Miss Olszewski typically

does not tarnish their reputations in front of the rest of the class, but will usually (unless they are being completely unreasonable) talk to them after class when it is just the two of them. This allows her to get her point across without the students getting angry at her for destroying what they worked so hard to obtain. By outright condemning their actions in class, these students would actually *gain* “cool points” or they will be so angry at the teacher for embarrassing them that they will not listen to what she has to say anyways. By removing them from the eyes and scrutiny of the class, she can deal with these students one-on-one and actually have an effect on how they act in the classroom.

Due to the types of students at Eisenhower High School, the Middle Class students are actually almost a minority. The school is in a rougher part of town, and many students are considered low-income by the government. However, although they are few, students in the Middle Class do make an impression. Typically, these students are better behaved than the lower socioeconomic students, but they do have a tendency to act up on occasion. Miss Olszewski usually deals with these students differently than she does with her other students. If they do become unruly, she will usually just give them a look that tells them to stop. If this does not work right away, she can usually just stay silent for a short time and they will realize that she is waiting for them to be quiet. By doing this, she is not outright criticizing them in class, but she is getting her point across quickly and efficiently so she can continue teaching the rest of the class.

The final group is the group of students who genuinely care about their education and who want to succeed in the class. If one of these students needs to be disciplined, Miss Olszewski can usually just gently tell them to stop and the problem is usually taken care of. Although this is not always the case, these students know that they are not

supposed to be talking in class and will usually stop whatever it is they are doing so they can continue learning and the rest of the class can move on as well. Unfortunately, these students are typically few and far between at Eisenhower, and Miss Olszewski (along with every other teacher at the school) has to get creative in order for the students to become excited about learning and for them to actually become motivated to complete their homework.

One other issue that Miss Olszewski has to deal with is the diversity in the classroom. For the most part, the students are actually extremely comfortable with people of different ethnicities, and it is usually not a problem that comes up. However, there have been a couple of instances that have proven to be a challenge, and the teacher had to deal with these actions before somebody was hurt or offended. Surprisingly enough, due to the respect that many students have for Miss Olszewski, if somebody says something that is out of line, all she has to do is become extremely serious and tell them that it is not funny (since that is usually what they were going for in the first place), and let them know that it will not be tolerated in her room. If the problem persists, she sends the student to the Dean's office to show follow up on her threat of not tolerating it, and also to show the other students that it is not funny to make jokes at the expense of another person's ethnicity.

As I was reflecting on my time at Eisenhower High School, I referred back to my previous journals that I wrote during my time there. One common thread that I noted was the importance of the relations between the teacher and the student. Miss Olszewski tries to gain the respect of every one of her students, which makes her job significantly easier. Notice I used the word *gain* instead of *demand*. By *gaining* their respect, they are

genuine in their actions and will adhere to her commands because they know it is the right thing to do. However, if she *demand*s their respect, they will only do what she says to keep her from getting angry and punishing the students. As a future teacher, this is extremely important to keep in mind. No matter who the students are or how they act, I need to constantly treat them with respect so that they will respect me in return. This will create much less commotion in the classroom, and real active learning can take place without distraction.

Overall, my experience at Eisenhower High School has been extremely rewarding and, as I look back and reflect, I can take many experiences that I have had and apply them to my future classroom. By using proper classroom management techniques, disciplining students in ways that will have the most affect, and by paying attention to diversity in the classroom, I can teach my future students effectively and they will hopefully come to respect me and believe that their education really is important. If they come to realize that their education is worth while and begin to want to learn more on their own, my goal as a teacher will have been fulfilled.