

Candidate Reflection on Student Teaching Experience

**Student ID # 0411968 “Exemplary”
(Student Teaching Abroad candidate)**

VII. Candidate Reflection on Student Teaching Experience	Description of Incidents (RIPTS 10)	Description of Effect on Student Teaching Experience (RIPTS 10)	Description of Self Learning (RIPTS 10)	Plans for Professional Development (RIPTS 10)	Organization, readability, spelling, and grammar (RIPTS 8)	5.83/6 Average Score	29/30 Total Score
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(Evaluator’s comments re: Candidate Reflection on Student Teaching) His final section on his reflection on specific experiences that impacted his understanding of himself as a teacher was quite powerful. He describes an experience where he had to intervene with a bullying incident. He really stayed calm and took the appropriate steps to escalate the situation. Knowing local laws and school policies became a reality for him in this instance. He also discussed a moment when he had to assert his authority with a class and realized how significant "taking charge" was for his effectiveness as a teacher.

My student teaching was a very different experience (than that of other student teachers) and more often than not I had to learn to role with the punches. The second week I was at Kirwan I was off to camp and the day before I was asked to be a camp leader instead of a helper. The first time I actually taught a lesson I was given my cooperating teacher's lesson and said teach this first period, which was an hour away. Furthermore, my first class teaching my own lesson, which was for the class featured in this TCWS, was my first observation from JCU. With saying that my first few weeks and lessons were much of a blur and looking back seemed to be more treading water than progressing forward. The first significant incident I want to reflect back upon was the class a week after my first observation, the first time I really felt like I had arrived as a student teacher.

When I arrived at Kirwan I was very eager to get started. I had gone to seminar every week listening to all the stories of my peers and was naturally excited about my study abroad experience. To compound the problem, I am not the best at sitting in the classroom and just observing, which my cooperating teacher quickly noticed. On the first day I was helping out during lessons as a teacher assistant and this would quickly progress into teaching lessons. With the inclusion of the camping trip my teaching schedule jumped the week we were gone for camp. When I came back it was time to take over classes and get on with student teaching. The first week was an adjustment and in some cases it felt like I was not being overwhelmed but I did not have the control I was looking for. However, the 9 History class one week from my first observation was a changing point.

During this class I first did the Knights and Samurai PowerPoint and then gave a quiz at the end of the class. At first I questioned my decision to put the quiz at the end of the class because so many things can happen, and I actually lost a quiz to a fire drill a few days earlier. Instead of being a problem, the idea of having the quiz at the end of the class forced me to be very assertive when it came to behavioral management during that class. I knew what I wanted to have accomplished during the class and I knew that it could be accomplished but I could not afford to have bad transitions and/or behavioral interruptions.

Two major decisions dramatically enhanced the lesson, my decision to use direct instruction during the PowerPoint and my willingness to move students to different desks if they were having behavioral issues. In many of our teaching classes direct instruction always seems to be dismissed as an inferior method of teaching. It supposedly is very boring for students and does not teach them to think independently. However, as I witnessed in my lesson, direct instruction can be used in certain circumstances to produce desired results. Not only were we able to cover the information in the PowerPoint but students were often asking what do you want us to write down at the end of the PowerPoint slide so you knew that they were engaged and learning. While it is important for students to be independent thinkers it is also important to realize that sometimes they just want to know the information and do not want to have to interpret it every step of the way. Direct instruction was not something I used commonly but I did find that it worked well when presenting foundational information that students would create independent questions from.

Behavioral management is the biggest burden for a new teacher. All new teachers have a fairly good grasp on their subject matter and are passionate to teach it but often cannot create a proper learning environment, and I have no problem admitting I am in this group. While I did not suddenly become a behavioral management expert during this lesson I did make a monumental step forward to being able to have a behaviorally managed class. It is obvious that students test new teachers to see what they can get away with and the week between my observation and this class was a constant barrage of tests to see where my line was. There were certain groups of students that were just being distractions the last couple of classes and this class could not afford it. So when these groups starting becoming problems I immediately broke them up. By asking one of the group to move in a calm voice the initial confrontation quickly gave away to a student in a new desk in a different part of the classroom. I do not believe that yelling and screaming at the students gets anything done and I did not want to fight with them I just wanted them to understand that what they were doing was not acceptable and if they wanted to sit wherever they wanted they needed to change their behavior. Moving students did not become a regular thing, actually it may have happened only once or twice after that in all of my classes, but the act drew a clear line and went a big way to establishing a proper learning environment.

This lesson, to me, was a jumping off point for the rest of my student teaching. I looked back at the reflections for the week and was surprised just how much progress I had made that single week. I went out of my way to challenge myself to make as much if not more progress every week following. Reflecting on this lesson, I learned two key points. First, do not be afraid to make use of all the tools I may have. Some methodology may be more popular

than others but it is more important to find your own way. For me, direct instruction is not the curse word that it seems to be for so many other people. In no way do I plan on basing my teaching pedagogy around direct instruction, but it is not something I will be discouraged to use in certain contexts, i.e. building solid knowledge foundations. Finally, behavioral management is an ongoing process but this lesson taught me how important it is to establish the line and make sure everyone knows it. There does not need to be a power struggle in establishing the line, there is nothing to argue about I am the teacher, but making it clear to everyone benefits both students and teacher.

The next critical incident I want to reflect upon occurred outside class time but involved one of my students and could have become a much greater problem than it did. While a teacher's main stage is their classroom their actions outside the classroom goes a long way to how they are perceived inside that classroom. However, there are actions that teachers can take, or can make deliberate attempts not to take, which can keep them from ever going back into a classroom again.

My cooperating teacher makes a great effort to provide students with a place to go during morning tea or during lunch if they are uncomfortable for any reason in the school yard. From hosting the chess club to having an open door for students to come ask for academic help to allowing students a place to get out of the sun, my teacher gave up his lunches to spend them in the classroom, and being a student teacher so did I.

One day it was just a crazy day at Kirwan and there were many different issues going on. It just so happened that my cooperating teacher left chess club to go with a student to the

administration to report a bullying incident and I had stepped out to grab my things to prepare for the next class we were going to have in the classroom. Upon returning to the classroom I started the usual routine of telling the students that it was time to start moving to their next class but I quickly noticed that these were not the normal chess club group. Instead, I noticed a very different group of students, including one who I got to know at camp who was never the trouble but always around it, and immediately changed my tone. It turned out that this new group of students, led by a particular student, was bullying a student I had in my 10th grade class and was trying to bait him into teaching. I literally put myself between the two of them and told the one bullying to leave, which he did with some resistance.

This had seemed like a major problem averted but no quicker than I could turn around the student who was being bullied had become overcome with emotion and picked up a chair and was heading towards the door. I abruptly blocked his path and demanded that he put the chair down, which he did only to pick up one of the decorative medieval weapons displayed in the classroom. The situation had quickly gone from bad to worse and I was between the door and an enraged student with a wooden sword. After a few tense moments, which included some intense staring and some focused language, the student was convinced to put the weapon down and go sit at the desk to cool down. My cooperating teacher came back just in time to hear some of the stories from some of my neighboring peers who had become aware of the situation when it started getting louder than our classroom. I was later told by my cooperating teacher that the bullied student must have liked me because he normally would have hit someone in that situation.

While the situation itself was a learning experience what happened afterwards was much more eye opening. Many different people had to fill out incident reports describing what had happened and the student who was doing the bullying got suspended for 20 days of school. Thankfully, everything that I did during that situation was what they had expected a teacher to do in a similar situation, maybe not a student teacher though. However, a few small changes could have cost me a potential teaching career. There are very fine lines between teacher and student contact and violating them, or even using specific language during that situation, could have proved very problematic. Furthermore, there also would have been consequences if I did not take the active role I did attempting to prevent students from harming each other.

Teaching is a career that can be extremely rewarding but it also comes with a lot of responsibility. In some of the most intense situations it can be the split second decisions that you make that determines if you can continue to be a teacher. As ridiculous as it might sound, knowing local laws and school policies are as an important to keeping your job sometimes as to how well you are as an actual teacher. Thankfully I passed that test but I will not forget what could have been in such a situation.

My final reflection does not revolve around a specific incident but rather an overall critical problem that happened to reoccur more often than I would have liked. During student teaching I have made a lot of progress to becoming a better teacher. I had learned how to alter my vocabulary in different situations to cater to different students and had become an okay behavioral manager. If there is one thing that I will acknowledge as in need of dramatic growth it is my ability to close a lesson.

At Kirwan the period length varied from a single period which was 40 minutes to a block period which would be 80 minutes. At first it was an adjustment to learn what types of lessons worked during the 40 minute classes and what worked during 80 minutes classes but I eventually became comfortable with the two different lengths. However, closing the lesson remained a problem for each period length. A lot of the times during the 40 minute lessons I would end up having to skip the close due to time and during the 80 minute lessons often I had to stretch the closing activity excessively.

No matter where I end up, and whatever the class lengths may be, I will need to address my need to improve the closing of my lesson. Thankfully, there are many activities and suggestions, my cooperating teacher already started showing me a few new methods, to better close classes. This is something I can continually research and improve and will make every attempt to remedy as much as possible before I can actually put it to test again.