

Placement Reflections

Focus Question 1: Teachers, Knowledge, Building Relationships: Invitation & Hospitality Core Questions: In what ways do you see teachers honouring different ways of knowing and doing in the classroom? In what ways do teachers build a sense of community in the classroom? In what ways can teachers build hospitable and invitational educational environments and relationships with all students?

Focus Question 2: Students & Learning Environment: Focus on places, spaces, and boundaries Core Questions: What do you see in the spaces and places in the school? Describe what the classroom(s) look like (include a sketch if you choose). In what ways do these classroom space(s) indicate power relationships? Does the space provide opportunities for all students to engage in learning? How did this space make you feel? How do teachers make classroom spaces more relational?

Focus Question 3: Truth & Reconciliation Core Questions: Think about what you have learned in your K-12 education about Indigenous history in Canada. What have you learned as an adult through media, family, friends and other learning experiences? As you read through the TRC booklet-Truth & Reconciliation: What would you do for a call to action? In your field placement, describe how teachers and the school community integrated and honoured Indigenous knowledges in the learning environment.

Focus Question 4: Changing Landscape: Inclusive Education-Diversity & Difference Core Questions: You will focus on the diversity, difference & inclusiveness in the school and classrooms. In what ways do the teachers and educational assistants honour inclusive education practices? How are the needs of EAL (English as Additional Language) learners being met in the classroom? In what ways do teachers, administrators and students honour diversity, equity, and human rights for gender and sexual diverse students in their classrooms and within their school and communities?

Final Field Experience Reflections: Interconnectedness of Knowledge, Schooling and Society Reflect on your overall experience, how you have come to understand the interconnectedness of knowledge, schooling and society. What have you learned? How were you able to contribute? What are some of your beliefs of teaching and learning that may have emerged or were validated in this experience? What surprised you? What questions do you now have? What do you know you need to learn more about?

Focus Question 1: Teachers, Knowledge, Building Relationships: Invitation & Hospitality Core Questions: In what ways do you see teachers honouring different ways of knowing and doing in the classroom? In what ways do teachers build a sense of community in the classroom? In what ways can teachers build hospitable and invitational educational environments and relationships with all students?

A:

“We’re not classroom teachers we’re school teachers.” - Principal

During our first meeting with the principal it was explained very clearly that the schools core principles of teaching are based in routines, procedures, and relationships. These principles take shape in the form of positive reinforcement for students by recognizing the good they do (however small they receive recognition), and by having their own Students’ Bill of Rights and Obligations. This charter lays out both the rights of all students and the responsibilities they must follow to keep those rights (this is something I will explore further in future focus questions).

I was placed in a 7/8 split. The classroom contains a mirror in the back that offers positive descriptors on the sides and generally attempts to make students feel better about themselves via appearance. Along the right wall is a “comfort zone” which isn’t a place but a poster that seems to be updated frequently. This week’s stated: “choose 1 way to be social & connect with others. Try it out this week.” Further down the same wall is a dry-erase homework board letting everyone know what is due and what is homework at any given time. Closer to the entrance of the classroom on a shelf that holds students' colouring supplies is a song suggestion box. This is because throughout the day during work periods and their morning routine, music is played. The box itself is opaque so that students won’t ever feel embarrassed to put in a song they may like. At the time of our arrival The class was peer-editing their “Investigative Article” , an assignment in which the class could research and write a short paper on essentially any issue they wished. The titles read aloud were very diverse in topic. Ranging from homophobia amongst Catholic schools, to environmental pollution, to sexual violence. It demonstrated to me an openness to hear what mattered to students and what piqued their individual interests. The peer-editing was done without the use of negativity; students were to circle or underline where something didn’t fit grammatically or where word choice could be spiced up a little. There was zero criticism of the topics or styles chosen. After English was finished, and following recess, it was now math. However, before immediately starting students were asked if they had any stories. Before every math class students get time to tell stories. How awesome is that?

The school is quite diverse in learning levels and backgrounds. With 70% of their 300 students being newcomers to Canada or being EAL (English as Additional Language) learners. 54 of these 300 are between the ages of 3 and 5. Yet the staff did not seem stressed nor did the

students. Everyone seemed to work together. Early on our tour we were introduced to three teachers who would cycle through all the classrooms to aid in EAL learning for students and to teach the “classroom teacher” how to better teach the same subject. These three specialize in working with EAL students to make them comfortable as they acclimate to the school.

Throughout my entire time in the classroom, and school as a whole, it showcased a very close-knit belonging. As we were given the tour by the principal they knew every student's name we passed. Teachers and students alike were saying good morning and generally smiling. In the classroom I was in specifically it was almost jarring how well the class synergized with the teacher and amongst themselves. Everyone was polite yet relaxed and able to both work and laugh. It was amazing to see a school so different from what I remember, and in all the right ways.

Focus Question 2: Students & Learning Environment: Focus on places, spaces, and boundaries
Core Questions: What do you see in the spaces and places in the school? Describe what the classroom(s) look like (include a sketch if you choose). In what ways do these classroom space(s) indicate power relationships? Does the space provide opportunities for all students to engage in learning? How did this space make you feel? How do teachers make classroom spaces more relational?

A:

The class I work with (the same 7/8 split) has a magnet board where every morning students move a magnet to say they're here. It also has spaces for library, workroom, bathroom and away. If a student is missing someone places a magnet into the away space. Students also move a magnet whenever they leave the room, besides lunch and recess. The classroom has a job list containing a job for every student. Including an “Absentee Consultant” which involves other students who have missed class going to them for information on what they've missed.

The staff room was covered in self-affirmations such as “You are a champion!” and “You are loved!” I was also able to hear a teacher prepping their substitute. The information the teacher shared was incredibly informative. Including specifics in dealing with behaviour and particular students behaviour, as well as how to prep and rework particular activities based on students engagement or behaviour.

Students are able to get up from their table and go to their hanger to grab their coat or a snack. An observation was students' candid ability to talk with their teacher. Students could talk in an informal, more honest way about classwork. There weren't just one or two students putting up their hands, it was a variety of students depending on the question and when they had last put up their hand. The principal along with other teachers come by the classroom to check in with both teacher and students.

Their final project based on the book they've been reading had the options of 1 of 3 critical analysis projects and 1 of 3 artistic projects. All these choices however were all to be

done on paper, odd but not without reason. As their prior Investigative Article was a typed up assignment. Very quickly students split into groups and began talking about what they would do for their project (all unprompted). As I walked around and talked to students they all had an idea of where to start. Students' willingness to talk with me about their ideas and to ask for help should not be taken for granted. It demonstrates a strength and confidence in themselves and trust that I, a new stranger, can help them.

Up on a wall is the "Class Agreement" a short set of rules expressed through students' word art. They include:

"Look at the person speaking", "Be inclusive & inviting have words power", "Be accountable to due dates n' peers", "Respect Space + Property", "Put your best effort into work and work time"

Here are some excerpts from the school's Student Bill of Rights and Obligations:

Right: "That you receive equal opportunity to education regardless of sex, race, ethnic background, religion, outward appearance or language preference."

Obligation: "That you acknowledge the differences among students and recognize that students will be taught differently because of individual needs."

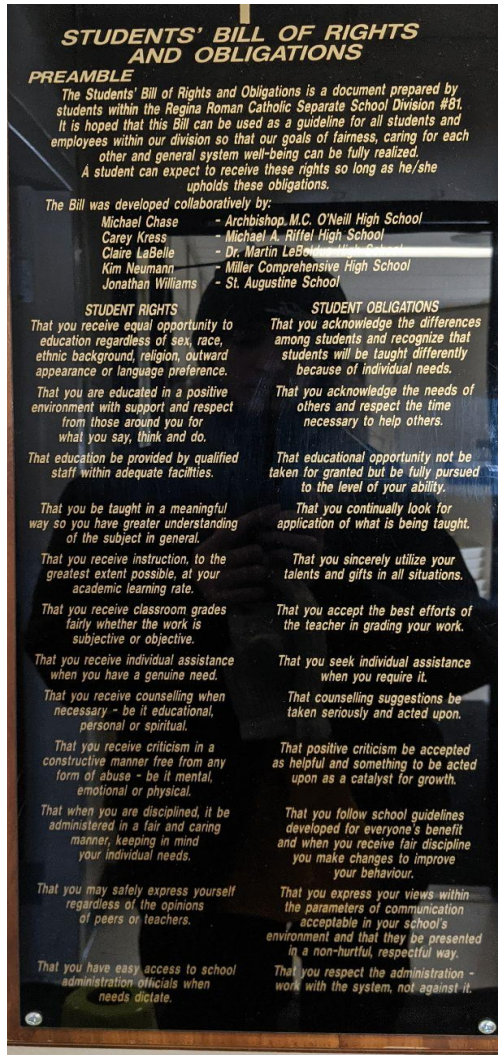
Right: "That you receive instruction, to the greatest extent possible, at your academic learning rate."

Obligation: "That you sincerely utilize your talents and gifts in all situations."

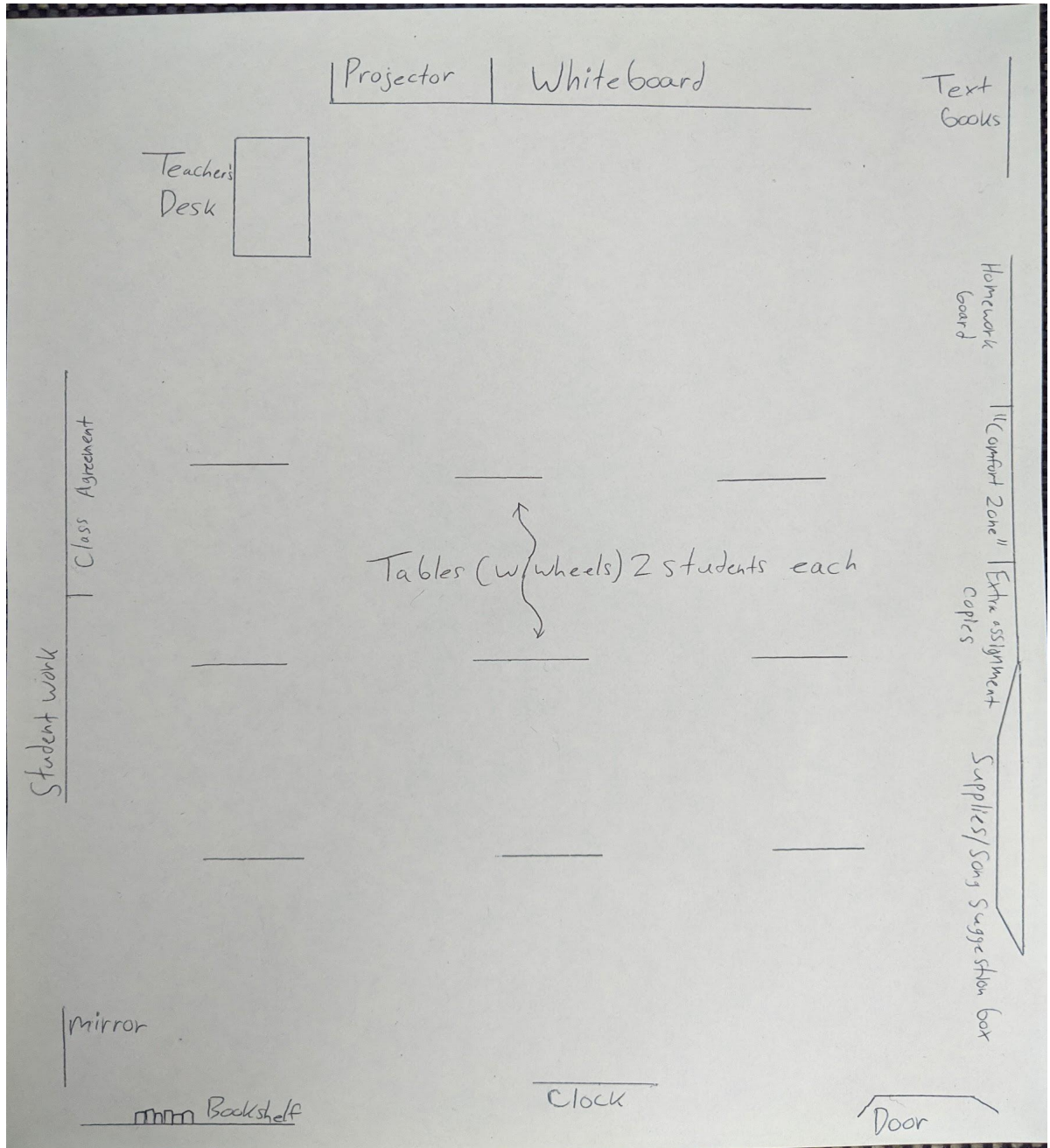
Right: "That you receive individual assistance when you have a genuine need."

Obligation: "That you seek individual assistance when you require it."

I've attached the bill in its entirety below:



The classroom is set up like this:



The placement of the teachers desk at the head of the room and the students tables laid out from there is fairly standard. The power relationship would at first glance be the “average classroom” however I’ve included the surroundings that students find themselves in, such as their work and their comfort zone (which is a place for challenges to break your comfort zone). Students can view their own accomplishments and goals for the class. Students' work is shown off in their work board, the classrooms supplies spot, and their class agreement. Goals are a portion of the extra assignment board, which shows the future and current goals for all subjects.

Power is shared in the setting. The teacher still resides at the front but it is not the focal point of a classroom which is covered in students marks.

As things stand this classroom accompanies differing styles of learning and offers choices in classwork. Students are given the opportunity to learn at their own pace and in a variety of methods. This class makes me feel like the classes I'm taking through the UofR will pay off. As the teacher of this classroom is themselves a UofR graduate who has only been teaching for a year and has fostered a class of respectful, responsible, educated, friendly, and inquisitive students. Another great day!

Focus Question 3: Focus Question 3: Truth & Reconciliation Core Questions: Think about what you have learned in your K-12 education about Indigenous history in Canada. What have you learned as an adult through media, family, friends and other learning experiences? As you read through the TRC booklet-Truth & Reconciliation: What would you do for a call to action? In your field placement, describe how teachers and the school community integrated and honoured Indigenous knowledges in the learning environment.

A:

I've learned about intergenerational trauma only as recently as last semester. I've learned that injustices against Indigenous peoples are often downplayed by the Canadian government. My call to action is to incorporate intergenerational trauma training into the UofR's Education program. Currently that looks like working with the Ambassador's program to get proper trainers, and general setup as a PD (Professional Development) event. My goal is ultimately to have teachers be sufficiently trained for moments in their teaching career where trauma arises in their classrooms.

Within the classroom I was placed this week, (a 1/2 split) written on the door is "Our class is a family" and that became evident in the student's behaviour and the classroom as a whole.

Something I was not expecting was for many of the 26 students to sing along with O Canada. This inspired me and so I sang along with them, when I otherwise would've stayed silent. Following "O Canada" the class and I sat on the carpet and acknowledged Treaty 4 and Indigenous homeland. What was impressive was that the students had this memorized just as they did "O Canada". This land acknowledgement took place before morning prayer!

A wall directly across from the gym showcases Indigenous ways of knowing. Containing the quote, "As long as the sun shines the grass grows and the river flows" Included was also seven principles: Love, Truth, Courage, Humility, Honesty, Respect, and Wisdom. This same wall also has the Lord's Prayer in Cree.

The class's collection of books supports and offers multiple ways of knowing, including Indigenous. And the school also had February designated as Indigenous Storytelling month.

The school I'm at is Catholic. However many of its students and staff are not. All that is asked is that the Catholic aspects of the school are respected. Regardless of religious background students at this school are celebrated. Throughout the school are different depictions of Jesus, both darker and lighter in skin tone, as well as an openness to discuss religion.

Near the student's book racks and exit to the playground is a wall showing a map of the world. This map is covered in stars. Each star represents where a student has come from. Alongside this is "The fruit of love is service" a quote that is similar to the UofR's motto, "As one who serves". The values that are important at this school are also important at the UofR. Something that I think helps to validate the UofR's Education experience.

Focus Question 4: Changing Landscape: Inclusive Education-Diversity & Difference Core Questions: You will focus on the diversity, difference & inclusiveness in the school and classrooms. In what ways do the teachers and educational assistants honour inclusive education practices? How are the needs of EAL (English as Additional Language) learners being met in the classroom? In what ways do teachers, administrators and students honour diversity, equity, and human rights for gender and sexual diverse students in their classrooms and within their school and communities?

A:

On my last half day the school was having a staff meeting and invited us to sit in. One of the points for the staff meeting is as follows:

Caring for kids: Any students that need some extra care?

This was an opportunity for teachers to mention specific students, as in what they needed and how to best work with them.

During the staff meeting teacher/student Lenten projects were mentioned (Lenten is a Catholic recognition of when Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert resisting temptation from Satan). Students were all participating in various community focused events for Lent, such as gathering toothbrushes/toothpaste (unused ones funnily enough) to give to Regina General Hospital's children's ward.

. The school had begun the incorporation of running records (a method of continuous benchmarking to gauge students' reading levels). This replaced the traditional benchmarking system of one or two meetings with students. So far the new system has been effective in gaining a better idea of where students' reading levels are then previously.

EAL learning at this school is a pillar of its success. As stated in a previous post 70% of the 300, now 306, students are either newcomers to Canada or EAL learners. Three main teachers work with students to teach English. These three also work with staff, giving them a better understanding of how to work with EAL learners and how to teach English.

Gender and sexual diversity in the school is not actively talked about unless brought up; If any student ever came and asked them for help that student would receive full attention and

resources. I was informed by the principal following this explanation that every once in a while someone will call their school to essentially see if the school supports their, the callers, bigoted views. The principal is always firm in that this school respects and openly celebrates peoples of all walks of life. Just because of the school's Catholic nature does not mean it falls into prejudice. The school offers paths of faith through Jesus and the Bible, but never seeks to convert a student or otherwise force them into anything. All that is asked is that those who do practice worship of Christ are respected as they themselves are.

The application of these principles in class is noticeable. Students are able to speak their mind -with their insights and intelligence valued- students have an active voice.

Final Field Experience Reflections: Interconnectedness of Knowledge, Schooling and Society
Reflect on your overall experience, how you have come to understand the interconnectedness of knowledge, schooling and society. What have you learned? How were you able to contribute? What are some of your beliefs of teaching and learning that may have emerged or were validated in this experience? What surprised you? What questions do you now have? What do you know you need to learn more about?

A:

“This is your only responsibility. Your school.” - Dad

My experiences have in part solidified my philosophy of teaching. My biggest principle that was validated is that students are a teacher's biggest and most vital responsibility. My past life experiences have been validated as has been my education through ECS. I recognized problems I'd dealt with at a similar age in the students I worked with, and was able to speak with them as their friend (a privilege I'm aware a full time teacher does not always get). I've reaffirmed that there is joy in learning and teaching. As I said in past reflections, these half days proved the usefulness and applicable knowledge being taught at the UofR's education program. The recognition of student needs, staff responsibility, work ethic, and principles in teaching, are some of the takeaways I've gotten out of ECS 101.

The most surprising thing was the relevancy of many topics discussed in class, in that the issues themselves were not present because the solutions were already in place. For example the lack of understanding wasn't there because representation and discussion had taken its place, eliminating the problem before it could even become one.

I'd like to learn lesson-planning, subject planning, speech therapy, how to get started in school disability programs, administration, how to best teach reconciliation in the classroom, differences in high school vs. elementary, really I'd like to learn everything I can.

My questions are how often does the ECS curriculum change? What is the likelihood of future teacher recertification and mandatory PD hours? Will that affect my generation of teachers? How long does it take to see a promotion generally? I have more questions, but the majority of them are “job-like” in nature, which I feel isn't as important here as the

emotional/understanding-based questions. Questions which I don't have many of. I'm confident in my ability to work with others, students especially, and recognize I will always be learning new, and hopefully better, things the further I go along this teaching journey.

Extras: The Polar Bear Club is a signed permission from parents to let students go outside in -30 weather. Although if it is ever past that or deemed to cold students are brought inside for recess regardless.

A sitting carpet is in the front of the classroom, in front of the student's desks.

Students sang a lot! They sang a day of the week song to the tune of the "Adams Family", they sang a weather song before discussing what the day's weather was, and had a song for the months of the year.

Game-Balls: Staff each award a ball to another staff member who has performed exceptionally well in one or more of these categories: Diversity, Excellence, Friendly, Encouraging, Devoted, Safe, and Educated. Diversity in particular being rewarded to staff who show skill in welcoming students who require