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The past week or so has been quite a whirl-wind. A lot going on, with the classes that I am teaching and with the class I am taking. The first full week of teaching the new students seemed to go rather smoothly. Mr. Hertzler and I had sat down and figured out the plan for each day of the unit for both A&P and Biology. It was just a matter of printing out worksheets beforehand and reflecting later. There were days that I felt spot-on, and others that I felt just fell apart. However, whenever Mr. Hertzler and I would discuss the day's activities, he assured me that I was doing a great job and that I was being too hard on myself. I agree with him on that point and am working my best to see my efforts from another perspective.

The students have been amazing. They are all honors students, but that doesn't mean that they are always focused; however, they are still amazing. They will re-focus if prompted, they ask a lot of questions, they are interested and intrigued by the content, and they do amazing work. It is funny to see how their minds work, the questions they ask, and even how they sometimes challenge me. It seems that some of them are always competing against each other, which is fine because they are getting the work done and doing well. For a while, I was scared and concerned that they were not going to like me or have an interest in listening to me, but I feel that I have gotten over that. I feel that I am at the point where I can joke around with them, but also call them out on not doing work or saying things that are inappropriate. On Friday, the students were completing a Brine Shrimp lab, and when I checked in on one of the groups they had not finished any of the preliminary work they should have. They seemed flustered and while I helped out, I also stated that this was something that they should have gotten checked and approved yesterday. I think me saying that got the one student a little upset because through-out the class, whenever I would check in on them, he stated that I was hovering around them. I understood his frustration, but I also said that I would not have to hover if he had done the work when it was asked of him. This was the same kid that the day before, when we were doing a microscope review, got distracted from the original lab because he was looking at his hair and other small things under the microscope. I really love to see the curiosity he brings to class, but I need to work on making sure he stays focused.

That being said, yesterday when I introduced the ecology unit, the same student and others were simply dumbfounded by some of the information I was presenting. The one kid kept repeating that he knew nothing, because he had some preconceived ideas about ecological things, but then both Mr. Hertzler and myself kept blowing his mind. The look on his face is the reason why I have always wanted to be a teacher.

While there have been some amazing days, there have also been days that I feel so overwhelmed and stressed, I feel that I can never be a good teacher. For the first unit, Mr. Hertzler and I prepped so much that I felt confident every day. But once the second unit came around, we didn't have the same amount of time to prep the same way we did for unit 1. I think it was either Sunday night or Monday, I almost had a nervous breakdown because I felt that I was so behind, and I just did not know what I was going to do. In addition to that, the new unit in A&P is one that I am not the most confident, content-wise; so, when I go to present the information, I feel like my presentation is flat and that I am floundering. Monday was just a bad day in general because I had gotten no sleep the night before. My brother, sister, and one of my cousins was in a horrible accident and did not get out of the ER until 5 in the morning. I did not sleep well, and even though they seemed to be okay when I left that morning, I was super worried all day. I feel that it definitely affected my ability to teach that day.

We have been told since we majored in education as freshmen, that student teacher would be the hardest semester of our life; I can say that even two weeks in, it is definitely the hardest thing that I have done yet. I love it, but it is still super stressful. A lot of the stress comes from me doubting myself and thinking that I am messing up everything I do, but I also drastically underestimated how much work goes into planning every single day. When we had a snow day today, I almost cried tears of joy because I would have the day to catch up on some work that I have been pushing off for the past week.

Another thing that brightened my mood is that during my 4th block A&P class, Mr. Hertzler wrote the following note and put it on my desk:

"You did a fantastic job today. Your prep was very clear. I can see a clear connection to you knowing where the class is going vs. More of an off the cusp sort of lesson. You're not ready to just jump in – that will come. For now, being ready each day is your best option. Your video was great. I loved the idea of terms that they didn't know. What a great way to encourage their curiosity. You dealt with Evan well 😊 A&P was your best day so far. Moving forward: 1. Command their attention. 2. Use transitions between activities. 3. be confident in what you know and honest about what you don't. 4. be ready ahead of time a day in advance. 5. Let me know how to help! 😊"

February 15th, 2018

This past week has taken forever. I think it is mostly because it is our first full week in a while. By Wednesday, I felt burnt out, and struggled to get up Thursday morning. Aside from my physical condition of being tired all of the time, my classes seem to be going fairly well. Mr. Hertzler has been giving me fantastic feedback and keeping me encouraged. In anatomy, on Friday and Monday, the students prepared for a debate and then actually performed the debate on Tuesday. They did such a great job on it, even though both blocks seemed extra nervous to do it. They came fully prepared to argue their case and they did wonderfully. So, besides the debate, A&P hasn't been very eventful.

Biology, on the other hand, has a lot going on. Monday and Tuesday went pretty well; they had a lecture on Monday and then were split up to complete a Niche Partitioning assignment. The majority of the students completed it, but there was a larger group in the back that took more time than they should have. They were all the top of the class and should have easily completed it. On Tuesday, Mr. Hertzler mentioned something about talking to them about their actions. So, during our flex period, I pulled the five of them back, told them I was disappointed in their behavior, and that from now on, they had to be in smaller groups and that they lost their privilege of finishing up work for homework. I sent them back to their seats and then I realized that I was shaking really bad...like a nervous shake. I do not like confrontation, AT ALL, and I think that was the hardest thing that I have had to do yet. I was a bit scared that they would be super disrespectful and disruptive after that, but on Wednesday, a few of them kept checking in with me to make sure that they were on task and finishing everything on time. I was super impressed.

On Wednesday, Dr. Meister had the opportunity to come observe my biology lesson. It was a lesson in which I created everything to go along with it, so I really wanted some feedback. And things went so well. I was so surprised. The students finished the assignment on time and the class went well. Dr. Meister had a lot of feedback to give, which I appreciated.

Today, I went into the day feeling pretty confident. I knew what I would be doing with biology and Mr. Hertzler helped me to modify things to make them a little better. In A&P, both blocks had a test, so I didn't have to worry about much. Because of this, I decided I would eat lunch with the other teachers instead of sitting in the room. When I came back for 3rd block and they started filing, I started to run into some technology problems. The presentation that I had updated earlier in the day wouldn't download, then the audio wouldn't work, and I had to switch computers multiple times. The beginning of class got off to a rocky start, and I feel that after that, I lost the kids. I had them work on a lab for the middle part of the class, they took much longer than they should have, and some of them seemed to get a little disrespectful. I had walked over to a group of boys working together and reminded them to stay on task and to finish up the few questions they had left. One of them made a comment about a video game and as I was walking away, I saw him motion towards me. I turned around and he snapped back to normal form and gave me a smile. I am pretty sure that he had flipped me off, but I cannot be certain, so I didn't say anything. However, I feel that that one action brought me down for the rest of the block and for the rest of the day. I haven't had a chance to talk to Mr. Hertzler about it yet, but I don't think that I will name any names. I just want to know what I am allowed to do if I do see any disrespect, because I am not going to tolerate it. I also need to remind this group of guys that they are not to be working together, because they do not focus on the task at hand.

I left today feeling super down, but I got talk it out with my roommate for a bit. I also just have to remind myself to never take what the students say or do personally. I am not here to impress anyone, and, while I would love for them to like and respect me, there are just going to be certain individuals who simply do not, just because I am the authority figure.