Internship 3 Reflection

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For my third internship, I had a teacher candidate, \*\*\*\*\*, complete her extended final practicum for eight weeks under my guidance. In January, 2020 \*\*\*\*\* began to take over teaching duties for myself and two other teachers whom I share my class with. As the primary teacher of division 803, I was assigned as the primary School Advisor (SA) for her final practicum. By the end of January, \*\*\*\*\* was teaching 80% of the time. My job through the process was to help her grow and develop as a teacher, providing her with feedback and guidance. The last week before spring break was her final week of teaching 80%; she was to phase out the first week after spring break.

**STANDARD 2: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

***Principals and Vice-Principals articulate a process of decision making using an ethical framework based on the moral purpose and direction of the school***

Typically, Trinity Western teacher candidates begin their final two practicums the first week of the school year. This allows then the opportunity to develop a relationship in the fall with the class they will be completing their final practicum with. \*\*\*\*\* began her final year towards certification, in a different Grade Eight class than mine. During one of her short practicums in November, the school advisor, whose class she had been working with since September ended up on a medical leave, and \*\*\*\*\* needed to finish that short practicum under the guidance of a revolving door of TTOC’s. When it became apparent that her school advisor would not be returning for \*\*\*\*\*’s long practicum, both the university and the principal at Yorkson Creek Middle school knew she would need a new placement. At our school, the options were limited, for several of the teachers had already committed teacher candidates from other institutions for the year.

As a result, the only way she could remain at Yorkson Creek is if she worked primarily under my guidance with my class. It was under this stressful situation that she was told that she could either go to another school, or stay at Yorkson, but not with the class she had been working with since September. To say she was upset was an understatement, for she really felt that she was getting short-changed on the relationship piece with the students. Her faculty advisor from the University, my principal, and I had to support a capable young lady, who felt that she should be allowed to teach in the other room under a temporary teacher, with the hopes of the other teacher returning.

It was interesting at this crossroads for her, for I felt for her, but I also couldn’t help but take some of her reluctance to change classes as personal. Rational me knew that she was just mourning the loss of what she had pictured her final practicum looking like, with the class she had established relationship with. I knew and my administration knew that the stability of a school advisor with experience with previous teacher candidates is what she actually needed for her final practicum, and that the relationship piece would be possible to establish with the timelines in place.

Ultimately, the decision to move her was in the best interests of both her and of the students in the previous class. They had had a revolving door of TTOC’s since their teacher had gone on medical leave, and they had just gotten a person to fill the term position. That teacher needed time to establish rapport and connection, and as a brand-new teacher could not support a teacher candidate and establish their own relationship with the class.

Unfortunately, \*\*\*\*\* entered her final practicum, a bit upset and still questioning why she had to be moved. It took a lot of kindness and patience to help her see the positives of the move. I needed to listen and guide with the gentleness needed to allow her to mourn her loss, but also gently push her towards moving forward so that she could have a successful final practicum in my classroom with my amazing students.

Part of helping her move on was a heavy reliance on the other teacher in the building who had a teacher candidate for Trinity Western at the Grade Eight level as well. She was a huge advocate for \*\*\*\*\* moving to my room and staying in the school so that they two teacher candidates would have each other as supports. They teacher at my school, Jenny, played a big role in providing me insight into the general emotional state of \*\*\*\*\*, allowing me to know when I could ‘push’ and when she needed a bit more time to come to an acceptance of her situation.

In the first two weeks of \*\*\*\*\*’s slow immersion into an 80% teaching role, it took a lot of patience, kindness and listening. It also took a lot of encouragement for her to build quick relationships with the students in my class. I provided her with a lot of ‘insider’ information to help her build rapport quickly with students. Thankfully, my class this year is great at ‘going with the flow’ and they were quick to welcome her in and accept her presence as a teacher in the room.

**STANDARD 6: INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY**

***Principals and Vice-Principals build and support positive, effective working relationships within the school and community.***

Three weeks into \*\*\*\*\*’s final practicum marked an awkward conversation between her, the faculty advisor and me. It was the second time the faculty advisor had come into observe her with the new class, the first time had been in the gym. I had not been present for this particular lesson, but I had of course been present for several lessons before this one. I had noticed, as I found out the faculty advisor had as well, that she had a ‘tone’ while delivering her lessons that was coming off as a bit harsh towards the students. I had already been thinking about a polite way to talk to her about how she seemed to be almost ‘barking orders’ at the class during portions of her lessons in the classroom. Fortunately, during her debrief with the faculty advisor, for which I was invited to be present, he brought up the idea that she should probably video herself and observe how she was delivering her lessons. He went on to point out to her that she needed to see how she was speaking with a ‘gym’ voice in the classroom. Since I was present, I gently pointed out that I had noted something similar from a lesson I had observed earlier in the morning. From there the three of us had a fantastic conversation, where \*\*\*\*\* expressed that she thought she needed to establish a bit of an authoritarian approach and didn’t realize that she was actually coming off as a bit too harsh. It is the awkward conversations with beginning teachers that are often the hardest. What I appreciated during this particular conversation was that the faculty advisor and I were able to speak to her in a positive and supportive way, not through a lens of piling on. I believe teacher advisors have the potential to inspire confidence through support and words of encouragement on how to improve their teaching practice and move forward, as such, the conversation ended with positive words of encouragement to help her leave understanding that this was an obstacle that she could easily overcome and that there were a lot of great instructional pieces she was already doing.

The next day, \*\*\*\*\* asked to speak to me before her first lesson of the day. She wanted me to tape her that day so that she could observe what her faculty advisor and I had pointed out. After we taped the session, that night she went home and watched and reflected on the assignment. The next day, she told me she had heard what we were talking about and that she hadn’t even realized how she was speaking to the class at moments throughout her lesson. She had also developed a few ideas around what she could do to move forward and wanted to go over her ideas with me. The next bit was an exercise in active listening with gently guidance. I have found in my years of taking teacher candidates, that often what they need is a sounding board for their though processes. My approach is often to listen and prompt when necessary to help them draw the conclusions that will best work for them. If I feed them ideas, then the shift in understanding about practice is often inauthentic and forced. Helping teacher candidates develop their ‘reflective muscles’ is one of the most important roles of teacher advisors. Teacher candidates need to find the self-awareness piece and see the strategies that work best for them, particularly around management and the delivery of lessons. Therefore, that morning I listened to some of her plans to adjust delivery and build relationship in more positive ways to evoke conversations and interactions she was hoping for in her upcoming lessons. As I listened, I provided advice only when it was asked for gently guiding her towards how to use her authentic self when conversing with the students – that she didn’t need a ‘teacher persona’ to create a positive learning environment for both herself and the students.

This experience for \*\*\*\*\* and myself started with an awkward conversation, which ultimately led to her feeling more empowered and on a positive path forward. It also helped me in understanding that she really needed personal space for reflection first, followed by support as she worked through ideas for herself. From those two days forward, I saw a real shift in her engagement with the students, but also in her acceptance of advice from me. I also, saw her become more willing to just ‘work her ideas out’ through conversation with me. There was a real shift in her engagement in wanting to learn and grow.

**STANDARD 8: COMMUNITY BUILDING**

***Principals and Vice-Principals play an integral role in creating and managing effective school communities to support all learners.***

One of the top reasons I take teacher candidates is the help push my own practice forward and learn new ideas. I also enjoy the lens that they place back on my own teaching and choices in the classroom. When I take teacher candidates, I find that it forces me to reflect on my own practice and choices for lessons and delivery of content. The process of mentoring and guiding someone into the professions requires me to be open and honest about the choice I make each day in my own practice. It places a lens on my own interactions with students in the classroom and on how I am doing at meeting the diverse needs in the classroom. In addition, it also gives me the opportunity to improve my practice, for I often find I learn new approaches and ideas towards subjects I have been teaching for years.

I find that the process of working with a teacher candidate allows for the opportunity for me to refine my thinking by forcing me to articulate the choices I make in classroom management, seating, lesson planning and assessment. The conversations I had with \*\*\*\*\* around developing a project for Social Studies was one of those valuable learning opportunities for me. She was preparing an open inquiry assignment based on a framework one of her professors had provided them during one of her curriculum courses. I have done a substantial amount of work around inquiry and have even spearheaded some projects and professional development in the district around inquiry in the past. The framework that \*\*\*\*\* was working from was unfamiliar to me, and it would have been really easy for me to just hand her something I had done in the past and I know worked. However, I instead allowed myself to enter the conversation and planning process with an open mind. Once I began listening to how she had developed the project, I realized that although she had been introduced to the ideas of using inquiry with students, this had only been done on a superficial level in their course. She had been provided with a framework and a theory of what could work but had not been given concrete examples of how to actually implement in an effective way. Because I took time to listen, I was able to hear what she wanted to do and help her develop that with the skills she had, gently guiding her towards what she was hoping to accomplish in theory and help her place it into her practice. The results were an incredible inquiry opportunity she had created with multiple entry points for the diverse needs of students in the room. Furthermore, I will humbly acknowledge that what she created ended up being far superior to the project I would have just handed to her. This is one of the most rewarding parts of taking on teacher candidates, suspending our own selves in the process of helping them become educators that can enter their future school communities with confidence, not sheep reproducing what I think they should be teaching.

**Log of Hours**

\*\*\*\*\*’s Practicum officially started on January 13 and ended on March 13.

Before her practicum began – at least 10 hours of discussion, reviewing initial lesson plans, and conversations about the class.

From January 13 to March 13 – 5 days onsite school support for a minimum of 6 hours a day, including conversations, phone calls, emailing, attending meetings, writing reports, debriefing, consulting and more. Total of over 270 hours (probably even more)