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First Day Project

Interview Record: Mrs. Joanne Maurer, 4th grade teacher at Norwood Park, interviewed 2/6/12
Mrs. Olson, Resource Teacher, interviewed 2/6/12

1. My future classroom is in a Lutheran school in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado. I imagine the school having a total of about 200 students and growing, despite the tough economic times.

There are about 15-20 5th graders in my class who come from middle-class families, and 1 or 2 students who are supported by the angel scholarship fund.

2. Developing a positive classroom community is essential to building a cohesive group of learners who are in the class as team players. The first step in building a classroom community is taking the initiative to inviting parents to be part of this community. I will begin this before the year starts with home visits. The reason that I am going to use home visits to build community is because it begins the year with a partnership between parents and me. Home visits will allow me to peek into student home lives in addition to meeting and speaking with parents on a more personal level. It is a time in which we can take the focus off of academics and look more at the whole child and the ways in which we can work together to help the child succeed. I want to use the opportunity to get to know students as individuals who have loves, dreams, desires, and hurts, which will all affect the learning that takes place at school. Home visits will give me a foundation on which to build my knowledge of each student and begin the essential parent-teacher relationship. At home visits, I will talk to parents about ways in which they can become involved at school, give them my contact information, and make it clear that I want open communication with them!

The next step I will take in developing relationships with students and parents is having an open house before the year starts. My classroom will be open for both students and parents to visit and see what it looks like. They will have the opportunity to look through the room, explore the group centers and class library, and check through the curriculum that we will be using. I will be available for questions and/or discussion. Not only will this give students and parents the chance to see the classroom, but it will also speak volumes of my dedication to teaching and the community that I strive to create. It will also serve as a time to catch up with families who I did

not have a home visit with to go over that vital information that they will need before school starts.

Additionally, I will include at least one get-to-know each other game or activity each week for the first month. This will be important in making students feel comfortable, welcome, and appreciated at school. During week one, students are making “Who am I” posters to not only display who they are to the class, but also to have an informal way of getting to know each of their classmates. Students also play “Never Have I Ever” on the first day which is both an icebreaker and a get-to-know you activity. I don’t expect my students to get along perfectly and all be best friends, but I do expect them to know and respect their classmates well enough to make 4th grade successful.

Another step that I will include in making a positive, engaging classroom is using student ideas in all ways possible. I want my students to help me arrange the room how they would like, read books for literature that they want, etc. Students are expected to make the classroom in the way that they want while being self-directed learners. Students have more motivation to learn when they have some say in what is done and it is interesting and relevant to them. This is both positive and engaging as it is inclusive of student ideas and takes into account their wants and needs in school.

Finally, there will be classroom jobs that students will have and they will change each week. There will be jobs such as Line Leader, Lunch Count Deliverer, Prayer Leader, Board Eraser, Errand Runner, Assignment Secretary, etc. Students will understand that all of these jobs are important, and without even one job, the class would not run as smoothly. The classroom runs like a community and needs all members to be successful. Classroom jobs, when done correctly, are typically an engaging and positive activity in which students participate and take ownership in their classroom experience. These jobs will be introduced on the first day of school and we will talk as a class about each job and what is expected of the student who has that particular job.

3. After interviewing my co-op and her fellow teacher, and learning the necessities of the first day of school, I have developed a schedule of activities for my first day of school as a teacher. It follows the basic schedule that I would use for the rest of the year, but instead of academics, we will be doing activities to build a classroom community. The day focuses around students feeling

safe and welcome, getting settled, and learning about the other people in the class. This includes students getting to know me, not only as a teacher with expectations, but also as a regular person who cares about their well-being. Students will know whether or not I am being authentic, so I will be myself while making my expectations clear to them. Students are expected to take time to get to know other students in the class or reconnect with students who they did not see over the summer. I realize that they will not all be best friends, but I expect them to at least be able to get along with one another and cooperate in group tasks. This is why I included Never Have I Ever, Apples to Apples, reading groups, and math games. During social studies time, students will make “Who am I” posters. I will have magazines, markers, construction paper, and scrapbooking paper that students can use to make their posters. Posters must include name, birthday, birthplace, siblings, hobbies, and interesting facts. The students will finish them at home if they do not finish at school, and students will present them the next day during social studies.

First Day of School:

8:00-8:20 Welcome students to school; students find desks and start organizing; attendance and lunch count; general announcement time

8:20-8:50 Opening chapel

8:50-9:00 Morning devotions & Luther’s Morning Prayer (said everyday)

9:00-9:30 Students finish organizing desks and supplies, teacher available to help and take class supplies i.e. tissues, hand sanitizers. Teacher goes over classroom procedures (see #5).

9:30-10:10 Play “Never Have I Ever” as class as a get-to-know-you game (Class sits in circle on chairs. Person in middle says, “Never have I ever (for example) been to the beach.” It must be a true statement. Everyone who HAS been to the beach must stand up and find a new place to sit. Whoever is left standing without a chair is now in the middle and says, “Never have I ever...” Game continues until everyone has had a turn in the middle.

10:10-10:20 Hand out snacks; talk about snack time everyday at 10:10, students may bring their own healthy snack to eat at this time during work time

10:20-11:00 Talk about behavior chart (see #4) as class behavior management system. Explain how it works, answer questions about it. Give examples of how it will look on a pretend student’s normal day, bad day, and great day. If there is extra time, divide the students into 2 groups and play Apples to Apples.

11:00-11:40 Reading Class; have 4 teacher chosen-books ready, explain the plot of each book to the class, have each student write down his/her top 3 choices of book to read, develop reading groups based on choices and have groups meet. Groups do initial meetings and choose literacy circle tasks.

11:40-12:20 Recess/Lunch

12:20-12:40 Rest time (bathroom/water breaks), spelling words handed out and spelling assignment given

12:40-1:20 Faith class; talk about JOY (see #4) and begin brainstorming classroom expectations that follow JOY in carousel activity (one table with poster How to Show Love for Jesus at School, one table with poster How to Show Love for Others at School, one table with poster How to Show love for Yourself at School). After 15 minutes of carousel, have class come back together and as a class, look at posters, allow students to explain or clarify points on posters if needed. Make class JOY poster with class-chosen JOY points, have each student sign, hang in the front of the classroom.

1:20-2:00 Math Class time; set up 4 math games around the room for students to play in groups, have them switch games and groups every 10 minutes.

2:00-2:40 Social Studies class: go over classroom jobs; make “Who am I” posters

2:40-3:00 Closing time; explain planners; Weekly Bible Verse/Memory Verse said as class; closing prayers; Luther’s evening prayer (said everyday)

Dear Parents,

Welcome to this new adventure of 4th grade! I have been looking forward to this year all summer, and now it's time to begin our journey through this year together. As the summer comes to a close, I wanted to touch base with you to go over classroom expectations

I have developed an expectations policy that pertains to student behavior during the school day, and I am going to share it with you so that we have a mutual understanding of what the classroom will be like. I will also go over this policy on the first day of school so that your student will know what is expected of him or her from day one and we can make this classroom successful!

The behavior chart is the main focus of this class' behavior management and will track students' behavior throughout the day. Below is a picture of our chart. All students begin the day on "ready to learn." When I see that a student is following directions and staying on task, I will inform the student that he or she may move his or her clip up to "Excellent Effort." Good deeds and kindness to one another may also allow a student to earn his or her way up the chart. Students have the opportunity to move all the way to the top of the chart. When a student has had 5 days of "Super Student" behavior, he or she will earn a red clip. After 5 days of "Super Student" behavior with the red clip, he or she will earn an orange clip. This goes on through yellow, green, blue, and purple. The top clip is the glitter clip, and it is my hope that all students have earned a glitter clip by the end of the year!

Not only will individual students benefit from positive behaviors, but the class will as well. On days in which each student stays on "Ready to Learn" or clips UP, the class will earn one point toward the reward of the class' choosing. (Bonus points are always a possibility, too!) When twenty points are earned, the class may choose from rewards that I have laid out, including an afternoon movie and popcorn, an extra afternoon recess, or an hour of playing Wii in the afternoon. Students may add to this option list if they have appropriate, teacher-approved ideas.

Sometimes, we have bad days or make bad decisions, like talking out of turn or running in the halls. In these and similar situations, a student who makes a bad decision will be asked to move his or her clip down to "Make Better Choices." Additional consequences will follow if misbehavior continues, including "Teacher's Choice" and "Parent Contact." "Teacher Choice" may include loss of recess or sitting out during computer time, and "Parent Contact" means a note will be sent home that will require student and parent signature. **Remember:** students

always have the opportunity to clip up (even if they have already clipped down) when they make good decisions; this classroom is run on grace!

Minor infractions (such as interrupting the speaker or participating in off-task behavior) will result in moving the clip down, but bigger problem behavior will result in bigger consequences. Blatant disrespect to another (classmate or myself), such as mean words or talking back, will result in the student clipping down and sitting away from the class and its activities. He or she may rejoin activities when he or she is ready to restore classroom community, ask for forgiveness, and join the class. Everything is based on students' decisions and choices of behavior. Also note that students can move both up *and* down the chart throughout the day.

In our first week of school, the students and I will develop basic classroom rules that will be based off of "JOY", or love for **JESUS**, love for **OTHERS**, and love for **YOURSELF**. We will talk about letting our love for Jesus guide all of our behavior. We will also talk about showing love to our classmates, even if we aren't best friends with all of them. Lastly is our love for ourselves, which is a humble, self-respecting love. A more detailed list of these rules will come home when they are written, and students and parents are expected to sign this classroom behavior contract to ensure that we will have a great year together! This contract will be the guide to our behavior chart and allow us a successful year in 4th grade!

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. I am your partner in your child's education and hope for open communication with you. We are a team in making 4th grade successful for your child and I look forward to working with you this year.

I am eager to meet with you for home visits and/or the open house. Be on the lookout for more information regarding those.

Blessings on your last days of summer,

Ms. Leinhos



Classroom Procedures

- Write your name on the white board to use restroom/water fountain, and take hall pass with you. Use hand sanitizer in classroom before you return to your desk. These breaks may be taken during work time.
- If you have an emergency and need to leave the room without permission (i.e. feeling queasy, bloody nose), place your laminated name card on my desk on your way out. This way you can leave the room without causing a distraction and I will know where you are.
- Stay at your desk during class time. If you need to stand or move around to help you pay attention, you may do so as long as you do not bother or distract your neighbors. Anything else should be done during work time, i.e. sharpen pencils, bathroom break.
- Raise hand and be recognized (called on) before speaking during class time. Listen to the speaker (teacher, student, or guest) with eyes, ears, and body.
- If you finish work or assignment during work time, you may do one of the following:
 - Read Reading Class book.
 - Work on an assignment for a different class.
 - If both of these are completely finished and assignments are turned in, you may read an independent reading book of your choice.
- Turn in assignments on the back table with Assignment Baskets. Be sure to turn assignment into its correct Class Basket (i.e. math assignment in Math Basket).
- Always remember to write both your name and class number on EVERY assignment! Assignments missing name OR class number automatically lose a letter grade.
- Graded assignments can be found in your file in the back of the room. Be sure to check this every so often as it will be emptied every other Friday.