

NAME: Michael Thom

Entry Date: October 18, 2007

Assigned Setting: Anderson Eastside MS 6th Grade Band

Cooperating Teacher: Mrs. Sue Finger

Summary of Observations:

After simply meeting with Mrs. Finger on Tuesday, today Stephen, Dan, and I got to actually watch a class period. The class (6th-grade brass and percussion) started with the full band in their seats, and the student teacher (Elizabeth Crane) took attendance. I found it interesting that they actually took class time to all sit and listen through attendance (e.g. Michael Thom? *Here*. Dan Miller? *Here*. Et al.). At this point, then, the kids were split into various sectionals, which met in different rooms. We all went with Mrs. Finger into a near-by room as she began to run the trumpet/horn sectional. The most striking thing about this whole sectional was how incredibly fast-paced it was. We could hardly keep up with her, and we're college seniors. I suppose her students are simply used to it, because none of them seemed particularly phased by it. If they can handle it, then I think that is awesome. This allows for so little downtime that they hardly have time to get into trouble. Nonetheless, we did also observe her handing out about five "checks." The first three were to three unique individuals, but the last two were to repeat offenders. Each of these was so streamlined that we hardly even noticed that she was giving them out. Even more so, we had to ask her after class we the offenses were, because we simply didn't notice. *That* is effective classroom management. I can hardly list everything she had the students do in the first few minutes because it was remarkable how much ground they covered in a matter of a few minutes. She started with breathing exercises, including sizzling; this then led to buzzing exercises. Next, they played the first five notes of a Bb major scale, but she stopped them due to tone quality. Tone quality? They've only been playing for a few weeks! But that's what sets her program apart from so many others. After she stopped, she had the student self-diagnose, and they determined (after several decent answers that just weren't quite what she was looking for) that they needed more controlled air. When she discovered that several of them had not completed the homework assignment (it wasn't quite clear to us what the assignment was, but it was something dealing with completing an exercise in their book), she made some comment about them being "not particularly responsible." Again, I think it's great that she's holding them accountable to that degree. Overall, it was quite obvious that she wanted the students to interact a lot, both with each other and (especially) with her. I'll have plenty to comment about in the future, as she manages to fit so much into the 50-minute-long classes, but my last comment for today is about the *process*. In our meeting on Tuesday, Mrs. Finger mentioned that they are all about *process* – taking an exercise or excerpt and breaking it down before they even play it through once, putting small chunks together to make larger chunks, and eventually putting these larger chunks together to make the whole phrase or exercise. This was very blatantly at work today as she broke down many of the exercises they played out of the book, working each section until it had the correct notes, was played using the correct rhythms, and was played with good tone quality. I am very impressed (though not at all surprised).

Summary of Participation Activities:

Today Stephen, Dan, and I observed Mrs. Finger in action.