December 2014
Placement 1: August-October 2014

_______'s initial student teaching placement was located at ______, a small rural school located in northeast Iowa. Due to declining enrollment, classrooms have been reduced to one teacher per grade level. ______ was in a third grade classroom with 20 students consisting of 12 boys and 8 girls. The students he taught had varying levels of learning and behavioral challenges some of which had been identified and others that were at the beginning stages of documentation. In this self-contained classroom, he taught all courses except music, art, and physical education.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers have to clearly outline expectations for rules and procedures for students and then practice those expectations. In this classroom, ______ sought to be consistent when working with his management and came up with varying plans to engage his learners in a challenging environment. Though ______ experienced several frustrating days, he was very willing to meet with me (his college supervisor) after school to try and implement strategies that would enable him to reach all students in his class.

During one of our meetings, ______ I recognized that his students needed to be more engaged during the lesson. He knew that involving only one student at the Smartboard left the rest of the class to sit and wait. Few students were paying attention and management became a challenge. To his credit, ______ created individual “white boards” with dry-erase boards so that students could work on answers while one student was working on a problem. This kept students more engaged and gave ______ assessment information.

_______ also carefully planned out the classroom arrangement when he was full-time teaching. He moved the students from their traditional row format into a partner formation, so they could work together. ______ did a careful job when determining which personalities would work best together.

Through these responses to a challenging management situation and struggling with his co-operating teacher's instructional philosophy, ______ did grow in his confidence and relationship with his third grade class. He became more animated in his interactions with the children in an effort to keep attention focused and moving in a positive direction. He also created a unit for science that involved students in researching about planets. Allowing some of choice of topics also increased student engagement.

With so much of his energy focused on management, there are areas of the curriculum that ______ needs to continue to develop. Reading instruction, for example, is one area that I am certain ______ need to be addressed in his second placement in upper elementary. Due to the increased time spent developing classroom expectations, ______ did not get to really teach content in a way that show-cased his teaching skills.

Although this placement was a challenge for him as a student teacher, ______ was in his classroom well before the day started readying himself for his students. He is a young teacher who is very sincere about planning what is best for children in his classroom. He cares deeply for the welfare of children and is a young man with great integrity. I am convinced that he will continue to make great strides during his next student teaching placements at the upper elementary levels.

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