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EDUC 450 – Instruction II

Setting and Context

Identifying and acknowledging climate and culture is paramount in understanding how and why the classroom works the way it does. This is an important task when joining any new culture. Researching demographics and behavioral aspects of cultures can lead to new insights. These insights can be very beneficial to a first year teacher, expanding and considering their new school. This information is public knowledge and is rather easy to find, yet holds much weight in its content. Thompson Valley High School contains grades nine through twelve and currently has 1,246 enrolled students. The student body is made up of 52 percent male and 48 percent female, and of this there is a 20 percent minority enrollment. There are 51 full time teachers revealing a ratio of student to teacher at 24:1. The TVHS offers advanced placement course work and exams for their students. I think this shows ambition and positive preparation for students. AP allows students to be challenged further in their strength areas of study for pre-college and college courses. The participation rate for AP is 31 percent. There is an overall student graduation rate of 80 percent.

I have been teaching and observing and teaching in Matt Crawford's visual arts classroom, painting II and drawing I. Both classes are interestingly similar in makeup. Both classes have 19 students and are made up of more females than males. I think the students seem to like Matt's classes and teaching style because there are multiple students who are in his drawing and painting back to back. The

class is very studio work oriented with lecture and demonstration. I think the students respond well to the demonstrations and appreciate the work time giving during class. The art room is a place for exploration and experimentation. This is an overarching “big idea” that is important to me to employ in my classroom. There is one student that does work well with the studio centered work environment. Elijah listens to headphones, keeps to himself, and refuses to work on his paintings. It can be very difficult to engage a student who doesn’t want to be there. I have talked to Eli multiple times, using questioning as a probing strategy. He has told me he is tired and doesn’t want to do any work. I figure there are going to be students like Eli in my classes when I am teaching. It is important to not give up on these students, but find connections and interesting outlets for them.

Thompson Valley High School seems to have a tight knit culture and community. Their motto is #TVSTRONG this semester. After talking to staff and administration it was acknowledged that the school suffered two student deaths from suicide last year. This obviously had affected the school and community immensely. The school is trying to support and rebound from the tragedies. The TVSTRONG hash tag is sediment for their recovery, support, and persistence in the Thompson School District.