

Human Relations Report Form: <https://goo.gl/photos/9x8H8nHzMpiZrVFo7>

Over the course of five weeks, I spent sixty hours in Mr. Dustin Buttell's seventh grade English classroom at Dakota Meadows Middle School (DMMS) in Mankato, MN. I worked with three different sections of students, two of which were instructional periods and one which was a study hall/What I Need (WIN) time. I worked directly with approximately 90 students. Along with the general education students, there were several students with learning and/or behavioral issues. There were also many students who were in the Challenge Group which is made up of high level readers and writers. At DMMS, there is a significant amount of ethnic and racial diversity, with one of the prominent minorities being the Somali population. In my class sections, the Somali, African-American, Asian, Indian, Native American, and Hispanic minority groups were all represented. During my placement, I had the opportunity to work with students in one-on-one, small group, and large group settings. I was responsible for whole class instruction for four of my five weeks. My instruction was based off of the novel *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech and focused on writing personal narratives.

This clinical experience impressed upon me the absolute importance of building relationships. In the novel *Walk Two Moons*, there is a prominent focus on how every person has a story, just as vivid and important as our own and how, unfortunately, it is when we do not take the time to learn other people's stories that we miss out on their brilliance. In my five weeks, I did not have nearly as much time as I would have liked to get to know my students' stories. However, through reading the students' personal narratives, I got to know so much more about who each of them is and who they want to be. It was the

students that I worked with the most that I really learned about and as a result, from whom I saw the most improvement and success academically. When I have my own classroom, I want to incorporate a personal narrative assignment as early on as possible, so that I really can learn my students' stories. As I continue being an educator, I will focus on building strong relationships with my students individually, so that I am more able to assist them with their academic needs.

- A. This clinical experience helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the contributions of various ethnic, racial, cultural, differently abled, and economic groups in our society, not so much with a focus on what has been contributed historically, but rather on what will yet be contributed. Having a classroom as mixed as mine allowed for far richer discussion and interactions among students. In discussions about our novel, I particularly noted that the non-native English speakers who participated lent a very interesting perspective to the conversations. I think this was largely due to the fact that they constructed meaning in a different way because of their English speaking ability. I had the opportunity to see students step up as leaders in the classroom, regardless of their ethnicity, race, abilities, or socio economic status. It emphasized to me once again that while it is a student's background that shapes their perspective and way of thinking, it is their motivation and interest which allow them to make positive contributions both in the classroom and in society as a whole.
- B. This clinical experience increased my ability to recognize and deal with dehumanizing biases, discrimination, and prejudices. One issue that came up

occasionally with my students was the use of the term “gay” as an insult. I was able to have a conversation with the boys about how this was inappropriate language particularly for the classroom, but really in any context, that they were not demonstrating PRIDE (Preparedness, Respect, Integrity, Determination, Excellence), and that using the term in that way quite frankly does not make sense and is offensive. We also had a guest speaker for the class one day, the school counselor, Leah Shanks. She spoke about empathy and the importance of not making snap judgements about others. This fit very well with the text we were reading and served as a great reminder for my students and me.

- C. This clinical experience increased my ability to create learning environments that contribute to the self-esteem of all persons and to positive interpersonal relations through the school-wide focus on building relationships. Buttell, along with the other teachers on my trail, set an excellent example for me in regards to having positive interactions with students. In between each class period and at the end of the day, Buttell was out in the hall, talking to students, giving high fives, asking about the students about their plans, teasing them, and calling each one by name. Buttell really emphasized the importance of greeting and saying goodbye to students individually, because as he said, “You might be the only one who actually says their name all day.” It was through this type of interaction that Buttell and I were able to make a positive impact on the students and a more welcoming classroom. One of my favorite opportunities to build a positive relationships with students came through my speaking Spanish. In my seventh hour, I had two students who were native

Spanish speakers. I had only a few short conversations with them in Spanish, but I felt that they definitely trusted me more as their teacher.

- D. This clinical experience led to an increase in my respect for human diversity and personal rights, but also made me more aware of how some aspects of having a diverse classroom can make teaching more difficult. During my five weeks in Buttell's classroom, I saw many contributions from students with a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, races, religions, ability levels, and experiences. Each of these students needed and deserved a seat in the classroom. I recognized even more so how this diversity can richen classroom discussion and activities. However, with having a classroom of 30 students and only 45 minutes, it is immensely challenging to provide individualized appropriate instruction that leads each student to meet the state given standards. It is this challenge which motivates me to continue working on my ability to differentiate instruction, to ensure that each of my students receive an appropriate and effective education.