

Field Journal Response for Week 6
Relationships

The classroom, like many other social environments is defined by the relationships that exist within it. Relationships can range anywhere from heavily personal and intimate to impersonal and distant with the majority falling healthily somewhere in between. Relationships exist on some level between each entity that plays a part in making up and defining the learning community – students, teachers, administration, parents, volunteers, and so on. As noted, the degree to which these relationships exist varies, and by extension the level at which each relationship functions does too.

This week at my field experience provided an excellent opportunity to deepen my understanding of the relationships that exist within the school walls and those that go beyond the property line of the school grounds. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week, F.E. Osborne was holding their first round of parent teacher interviews. After some discussion with my partner teacher, we decided that I should sit in on her Thursday afternoon appointments. This was a really interesting experience.

It has been quite a long time since the last time I witnessed / took part in a parent teacher interview and it was on the other side of the desk so to speak. I inquired with my partner teacher, along with several other teachers in the teachers' lounge about their feelings on parent teacher interviews. In general, I got the impression that most of the teachers viewed them as a necessary evil. I also got the impression that each teacher seemed to have some personal examples of parent teacher interviews gone bad, and was fortunate enough to have one of the teachers in the school show me some email correspondence that she had been having with one student's parents that was leaving her with the impression that her interview with them would be difficult to have run smoothly. The opportunity to sit in on parent teacher interviews provided a small insight on how the parent – teacher relationship is defined, but it did more to expand on the relationship that exists between teachers in the school.

On more than one occasion this week, I witnessed teachers reaching out to each other for advice on how to deal with specific students and with parents. As for the parent teacher interviews I noticed that an appeal for unity through the presence of another teacher at the interview table was common and for dealing with specific students simple discussion would do. Over my first few weeks, I have also had a few discussions on coding and IPP's and went so far to ask my partner teacher what she thought of the fact that there is sometimes only one teacher working on students' individual objectives. After our discussion I was left with the impression that these IPP's are a source of frustration for some teachers not only because they take up a lot of time, but also because when only one teacher works on the plan, their recommendations and goals only really apply to the subject they teach. To me this seems like an oversight in so far as if only one teacher is working on recommendations, how complete and well guided can they really be? How do they objectives relate to other subjects and how can they and will they impact how the student learns in other classes?

As mentioned at the beginning of this response, the relationships that exist within a school are between those players that constitute and makeup the learning community. These relationships are developed as implied through different means and to varying degrees. The relationship between student and teacher is developed with each new school year, class, and interaction. The relationship is also ingrained in the structure of the educational system in so far as students, and teachers for that matter, are conditioned to develop relationships with each year that passes. From a student's perspective, relationships with teachers evolve over their entire education from ECE to Grade 12. As time and development progress, each student will slowly but surely be exposed to more and more teachers – from 1 or 2 in their first years to possibly 12 or more in their last year of school. Not only does the number of teacher increase, but naturally so to do the types of or personalities one encounters as well. Similarly, a teacher will be exposed a revolving door of different students over their career, the only difference is that their exposure doesn't increase at the comfortable rate of that at which a students' does. I had an opportunity to talk with a substitute who was in for my partner teacher on Wednesday about this reality, and she explained that with time, you start to be able to identify though what type of student each individual is fairly quickly, and how you cultivate that relationship depends on your own experiences and according to her how much each student is willing to put into their relationship with their teacher.

Having only been at FEO for 8 days now, there are numerous relationships with students that I have not yet had the opportunity to develop as much as I would eventually like. I suppose this is common because, after all, when I only see people twice a week it is difficult to truly get to know them. I have a few relationships that are developing quite easily. One example is with a boy in one of the grade 9 classes who has from my first day been friendly with me, even going so far as requesting a high five every time I see him. Another is with a group of girls who are notorious for being loud who great me every time I see them by saying "Hi PATTY!" There are numerous other examples of successfully developing relationships, however, that being said there are a few relationships in particular that will be a challenge to develop. One in particular is with a girl in the ESL class who speaks next to no English. Verbal communication has been difficult, but I have been able to communicate with her through body language, symbols, and some illustrations. For example, I kneeled down beside her desk on Wednesday to help her work through her booklet. One question she couldn't understand was identifying a word from a list that started with the same *sound* as cat. The language used in the question was: Which of the following words begins with the same sound as the first letter from the word cat. I eventually uncovered the origin of her misunderstanding, which was the word "first". I used some scrap paper to draw out a visual example that illustrated the word first and followed by using phonetics and pointing to words to show her what the question was asking. Below is a rough example of what I drew:

O	O	O
Beginning	Middle	End
First		Last
1	2	3
(C)	(A)	(T)
(ka)	(ae)	(t)

Ultimately, relationships that exist within the learning community vary from case to case. The nature of this profession is built on relationships and to a certain extent, I believe the ability to create successful and productive relationships is a big part in defining the success of one's own career. The reality is that not everyone is going to see eye-to-eye on every issue and the extent to which people will invest in relationships will heavily depend on their own initiative and desire. The challenge will be working to develop those relationships where conflict or tension is inevitable. Each member of the learning community is filled with assumptions on relationships, particularly between student and teacher. The assumption of the teacher can't just be that every student is the same and that they each require the same attention, just as the student can't assume that every teacher is the same, and if they have had poor relationships in the past that means they are certain to have more in the future. Challenging assumptions then will be crucial in developing relationships, whether that means challenging the friendly outgoing students assumption that as a teacher I am present to be friends and the assumption of the student who believes that as a teacher I am only there to make their life difficult. Balance again will be important, and as I have learned from conversations with so many teachers, relationships will vary, no matter how great you become at developing them.