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HPE 369

Reflection

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During my Practicum at Hugo Owens Middle School in Chesapeake, VA I learned a lot about what middle school physical education class should and shouldn't look like. The school is an average size middle school housing grade sixth through eighth. The gym classes consisted of three 8th grade classes, two 7th grade classes, and two grade classes with each teacher have a class size ranging from approximately 25 to 35 students per class for the seven physical education teachers employed at the school. The teachers worked in co-ed pairs except for the department head who rotated his class among the three teamed up teachers, he stated that this allowed him to stay connected to the students and fellow teachers.

During my observation time I noticed that the teaming up of a male and female teacher together to work at as a team worked better than I imagined. In particular because during my time there the department was going through family life classes in which the boys and girls are taught the material in separate settings. By being partnered with another teacher, the male teacher taught the male students, with the female teacher teaching the female students. With them working together in the gym, both teachers and students are already familiar with each other. Another strength that I thought the department had was the ability to divide the space that they had to work with by using partition curtains to separate the space into at least four separate areas as well as having three classrooms at their disposal. Another strength I saw during my observation at HOMS was how supportive and friendly the staff and administrators were to each other and the students, I felt for the majority there was a high level of respect shared. This was

especially helpful when dealing with students in the hallways or when dealing with a situation regarding a student from gym class. There was a feeling that the administrator didn't pick sides between a student or teacher but instead got each parties side of the story as well as seeking a third-party opinion before dealing with discipline situations. However, this strength was also one of the school's challenges. In moments where situations arose that a decision needed to be made quickly due to the severity, it allowed the situation to fester or escalate further by waiting for the administrator to come to the gym rather than just have security escort the student out away until the administrator was able to deal with the situation. In one instance a student and his lookout were caught in the act stealing money from the teacher's desk in his locker room office. The teacher called for administrator and security to come to his aide with the situation, but time continued to pass so the gym teacher that had planning block escorted the students directly to the school resource officer. Another challenge for the physical education department was dealing with the scheduling of the family life unit. Due to the number of boy students being almost double that of the girls, it took two weeks for the boys to complete family life. Once the boys were finished then the girls were able to begin, however due to teacher absences and holidays the girls ended up taking almost 2 weeks as well. So, for four weeks of physical education the only instruction that was occurring was in family life, as the students that had gym were able to choose from several activities and participate in open gym play. During the second week of boy's family life, it was discussed during a department meeting how the schedule could have been worked differently. Many were in agreeance that it might have been better to do alternating weeks to break up the amount of open gym days and allow potentially for units to be covered in the gym as well as in the classroom. They planned on next year taking a better look at the calendar and picking a time frame that didn't include any days off from school.

During the practicum I was able to gain more practice in classroom management situations. One skill that my school clinical faculty praised me for was my ability to adapt lessons or situations in order to make the activity more enjoyable or safer for the students.

During my time in the gym, much as the lessons were more than often open gym choices without much instruction on skills. I was however able to adjust the game play by adding varying rules or restrictions that would force the use of certain skills that would make the activities more challenging as well as more inclusive to all the students participating. The students enjoyed the adjustments and, in some cases, forced them to think and form strategy as a team to solve the problem the other team presented them. By engaging the students in a more informal approach, majority of the students were much more comfortable and participated more in the activities rather than sitting out or failing to dress out. With the groups being mostly male students due to family life the level of competitiveness I was told was much higher than it normally was when in coed setting. During the practicum I also learned of various challenges that I will be faced with as a teacher, especially in the physical education setting. One of the things that was reflected to me was that I needed to speak louder, slower, and clearer when addressing large groups of students, especially when in the gym setting. Sometimes I get caught trying to get the information out quickly before students lose interest but that also leads to situations where those that are paying attention are not able to understand everything that I am saying. Mr. Munden did say that I spoke better to the class when we were in an outdoor setting and attributed that to there being less surrounding noise as well as my experience coaching soccer. Another challenge that I foresee being a potential issue is as a gym teacher you have a responsibility to know your students in your class but sometimes in the gym setting classes are mixed setting or activities. When this occurs, you will have students that are not familiar with you and you are not familiar

with them either. Their teacher might enforce rules slightly different than you do for your class or the students might just not respond to you because in their eyes you are not their teacher and feel they have the ability to challenge your authority and push the limits. I saw this a few times where students who were uncooperative with the other gym teachers but when their gym teacher duo were present they were compliant. Mostly I believe it was just kids testing their limits but was glad to see when one teacher saw this occur, they were generally quick to show support to their fellow teacher and deal with the student's poor attitude.

I felt the experience of the practicum observation was very well rounded. In the setting of Hugo Owens Middle School, I was able to work with seven different physical education teachers and see various ways to manage a class in different situations. Mr. Munden was very helpful and offered guidance throughout my time spent with the Mustangs. I look forward to student teaching in the spring and applying some of the ideas and activities that I learned during my practicum study.