

Teacher Institute Day Reflection

Day 1

Today was a Teacher Institute Day. I attended all the same meetings as my cooperating teacher, which gave me the chance to see more of what goes on behind the scenes at the school. I learned that Normal Community has a variety of different programs, like Cares and APEX courses, for struggling students. I still have more to learn about those programs. I learned some statistics about the school. For example, the enrollment rates are continuing to increase, which is good because students obviously want to attend NCHS. However, it is stressful for teachers to have growing class sizes. Another interesting note is they have a “Data Wall” that allows teachers to view each student's test scores and grades. I also learned about safety procedures, like a code red, fire drill, and tornado drill. Other topics were about the every day logistics, like substitutes, room reservations, assemblies, tardy policies, and field trips. For the department meeting, we talked about volunteer requirements. Each teacher is expected to volunteer twice. For example, a teacher could sell tickets to a dance, coordinate an event, or chaperone an event. They used sign up genius to choose the volunteer spots they wanted. Finally, I worked with my CT for another couple hours to get our first week and a half planned out. One thing that stood out to me is the level of community I felt amongst the teachers, staff, and administration. Everyone seemed positive and excited to be there. The overall attitude was that we are here to help the students succeed, and everyone all seemed to have strong friendships with each other. I am excited to work with this group of teachers and be in a really positive environment for my first experience.

Day 2

Today was the second Teacher Institute Day, which included all the secondary teachers in the district. There was a seminar at the beginning of the day that all of the teachers attended. The principals, school board members, and superintendent gave speeches. I learned that each year there is a specific initiative for unit 5 schools. This year the initiative is “cultivate the art of teaching”, which allows room for the initiatives of the past years to grow and develop without adding in a new one. After these speeches, we split up into content areas. When we were in the art meetings, the teachers spoke candidly about the speeches that were made. They seemed happy and relieved that the administrators had a more positive attitude than in the past. The message used to be “do more with less”, and now it is “thank you for all that you do”. In these meetings the middle school and high school teachers talked about the big picture of how to coordinate their programs and curriculums. They talked about how all the other elective classes have some kind of a hook. For example, band has an expensive instrument, which is an investment. So parents have incentive to keep their students in band in high school. Foreign language is required in high school and in college. So the parents want their kids to take that over visual art a lot of the time. All of the teachers were brainstorming how they could create a hook for visual arts, moving from middle school to high school. They discussed possibly developing a dual credit class with Heartland. They also considered the possibility of allowing students to start in a more advanced art class in high school if they had taken and done well in 8th grade art. After this meeting, we split up into high school and middle school art teachers. The high school meeting was interesting because I

was able to see how they work together to develop curriculum. Another thing they talked about was the new teacher evaluation process, which requires them to think of types of lessons and assessments that will be accepted district-wide to meet the new SLO Framework. Seeing this side of things was eye opening to the amount of work on an teacher's plate, and I know that there is so much more that goes into this process than what I saw today. I also saw first-hand how the requirements, responsibilities, and methods for teachers are constantly evolving.