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English 112B   
Professor Warner   
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Suicide Prevention

**Field Experience**

From September 25, 2018, to October 4, 2018, I observed Mr. Griffin Sophomore and Senior classes at Evergreen Valley High School in San Jose California. The experience taught me a lot about what it means to be a teacher and how to interact with teens. I observed four classes each either the same Sophomore or Senior class, however, each experience with the students was different. What I learned is that while each class has a basic outline, it’s not always followed to the letter. Each student’s needs are different, so the relationships and class structures will not always be the same.   
 When I first started observing Mr. Griffin’s English 2A (sophomores) class, they were just beginning *Catcher and the Rye*. He had the agenda up which looked like this:

* Journal entry: one minute to think two minutes to write what happened in the reading.
* Learn to read.
* Take notes.

This was a basic outline of what the schedule would entail. The class started with the journal entry. Once done with that he started a conversation on how the students approach reading. Mr. Griffin’s main goal for his students was for them to see reading as a comforting experience. He didn’t want them to see it as something they had to do for class. First, he asked the students how they felt when they read, what experiences they had. Some students said they could see what was happening like a movie, others said they zone out. Mr. Griffin then gave them techniques to help the students de-stress before they started to read or do any studying. He had them all lay on the floor and taught them how to meditate. Both sophomore classes ran similarly that day.   
 Mr. Griffin’s AP Language Senior classes showed me how different students require different learning environments. Agenda for 9/25/18 looked like this:

* Journal gave yesterday’s topic; how you doin? Aside from brain discipline
* *Hume, Stuart, Kent, Mill*
* HW: PAP (questions for discussion)

For the first senior class, after the students took five minutes for their journal entries, Mr. Griffin had them gather in a circle on the floor to have a story time. After the story time, the class decided to stay on the floor for the remainder of the period. His second senior class, however, did not have a story time. Instead, a discussion broke out about Indian culture in California. This took up most of the period.   
 When I returned to observe his classes again, I remembered thinking of my past experience with the classes, and I went into the next observation with the purpose to note the difference in each class, each students' personalities and interactions with Mr. Griffin. I found that his first sophomore and senior classes seemed to be more outspoken and interactive with Mr.Griffin and also with the entire class. His first AP senior class seemed to be more interactive. They sat where ever they wanted in the room, whether that be on the floor, or in their desks. Mr. Griffin offers every class tea. The first AP seniors were the only one to make tea, while the second AP senior class did not make any. I also noted that the students were more outspoken in Mr. Griffin’s first sophomore class than his second. The difference was not only with the classes though. When talking with Mr. Griffin, I noticed how he could pick up on the students that were having a rougher time in his first classes better than his second. My conclusion for this was repetition. I think when Mr. Griffin has to teach the same classes all day a certain connection with the next classes that are repeating is lost.

**Rationale for Unit of Study**

While conversing with Mr. Griffin, I was informed about the suicide issue they had at Evergreen Valley High School a few years prior. With the highest PSAT scores in the nation, the competition between the students for admissions into IVY League colleges had never been higher. A lot of students were feeling the pressure to gain attendance into top universities along with pressure from their everyday life. Mr. Griffin informed me that a lot of students would think of themselves as inadequate because they were not accepted into top colleges, so he created a rejection letter wall. On this wall, students were able to put up their rejection letters to help each other understand that rejection is a part of life. This conversation inspired my lesson plan for suicide prevention.

At the beginning of the semester, I will give my students the opportunity to decide which novels they want to read throughout their time with me. Like all the other lesson they will be doing, for the suicide prevention one, they will be able to choose from three YA novels:

* *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven.   
  Brings together, Theodore and Violet. They meet on the edge of their school's bell tower. With both of them suicidal, it is hard to know for sure who is the savior that day. They are brought together again through a school project where they become good friends. They are able to open up to one another in a way they can't with the people around them. The story is about living life and learning to find comfort in friendship.
* *My Heart and Other Black Holes* by Jasmine Warga   
  Tells the story of Aysel who is obsessed with planning her demise. Between a mother who can't stand her, a school full of bullies and a father who committed a terrible crime, Aysel sees no reason to be alive. However, she can't seem to commit suicide on her own, so she meets Roman in a chat room, and they both make a pact to help each other. As time goes on and the pair grows closer, Aysel finds that she doesn't want to die anymore, and she wants to see where her and Roman’s relationship goes. Yet she knows convincing Roman of this will not be easy.
* *Falling into Place* by Amy Zhang   
  Liz Emerson is one of the most popular girls in her junior class, so it comes as quite the shock when she runs her car off the road and into a tree. Everyone starts to question why she did this. Throughout the story, her family and peers try to piece together the secret life of the teenager and why she would do such a thing.

(For the sake of the presentation, I am going to use *Falling into Place*.)

Once my students know which novel they want to read, we will vote on them as a class. They will write their vote down on a piece of paper and I will count up the tally. The majority vote will be the winner.

My overall goals for this lesson plan is for my students to have a better understanding for:

* Anxiety and Depression.
* How to cope with Anxiety and Depression.
* What Anxiety and Depression look like.
* Why someone would commit suicide.
* How to cope with suicide.
* How to reach out for help.
* How to deal with stress.
* How to help others dealing with anxiety and depression.
* What to do if someone you know is suicidal.

I will start my students off with having them understand that it is not our place to judge who is depressed, anxious, or suicidal. I will make sure that they understand it is only a psychologist that can determine the right course of action for someone suffering from any of these conditions. However, they have to understand that just because someone looks happy doesn’t mean they are not suffering from these illnesses. My students need to understand first and foremost that these conditions don’t always have a certain look to them, they are a mental disease.

From the beginning of the semester to the end of it, all students will write in an at-home journal each day, for a minimum of ten minutes. They will recount what events happened in their day, how it went, how they felt and so forth. Each Friday my students will bring a journal entry to discuss as a class.

For the two weeks of my suicide lesson plan, each student will either read at home or in class. Monday, Wednesday and Friday the students will read twenty-two pages or until the end of the chapter. Tuesdays and Thursdays the students will read as a class. The days they read in class, my students will write in their in-class journals a summary of what occurred in the previous night’s reading. Mondays and Wednesdays the class will have a discussion about the readings thus far. Friday class, the students will have their journal entry discussions and any extra time will be dedicated to independent study.

By the end of these two weeks my students will need to complete the following:

* In groups of four, students will need to create a PowerPoint presentation detailing what they learned about suicide/depression/anxiety through the reading. How the literature helped their understanding of the disease.
* Each student will need to turn in their in-class journal entries for the assignment.
* All students will need to write a five-hundred-word essay detailing the similarities and differences of their life compared to the protagonist in the novel. They should refer back to the at home journal entries, using specific examples in both their entries and the text.

The learning values for this lesson are for my students to have a better understanding of not only the diseases but a better understanding of emotional states. The lesson and journals as a whole, are for me to ensure that my students have a comfortable place where they feel they can share what is going on in their lives. Through the use of YA literature, my students will be able to relate to the protagonist and the generation in which the story is set. This will ensure that they are not only reading the text but having a better understanding of what emotions are being portrayed in it. My biggest reason for them to write a paper comparing their lives to the life of the protagonist is, so they can see how each person handles their emotions, and/or life struggles differently. Overall, I want my students to feel comfortable speaking up about how they are feeling. I want them to know someone cares. I have designed this lesson plan specifically for juniors, due to that normally being the hardest year for students.

Work Cited

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