Donri Helmer, Cohort 1

EDPR 3100 Final Journal Entry

*This was a full week!*

The most outstanding and haunting memory of this week was our tour of the Kamloops Aboriginal Museum. This included a tour of the Residential School that stands on this property. The lady who led us through the school had parents who were taken to this school. It is one thing to learn about the horrible things that happened to the Aboriginal children, but to actually walk through a Residential School and be shown the sites first-hand is the ultimate history lesson. I could actually feel the sadness resonating throughout the building like a restless spirit.

On Tuesday afternoon, Amanda Russet arranged for us to visit Dallas Elementary and work one-on-one with some students. These students shared their mathematical thinking with us. This was an excellent learning opportunity to create effective questions to ask how the students tackled a variety of problems. It was interesting to see the similarities and differences in their processes. Regardless of their method used, the students were quite proud to chat about their work. Asking their reasons as to why they chose their particular problem gave a quick insight into each of the student’s preferred subjects. For example, many chose a Journal Designing activity because it gave them a chance to draw rather than only write equations and calculations.

*Reference to points 5 through 7:*

I had a memorable day at practicum as well! I had my formal evaluation and, of course, a couple of the students who hardly misbehave, acted out. I feel that the lesson went well, but these two kept me on my toes! Despite the fact that I really wanted to sit down and talk with the boy who was having troubles, I needed to keep the lesson going for the other kids. Fortunately, I was able to have a little chat with him later in the day. Even though I have some experience with older students, I really learned from today’s situation. The primary students need a whole different level of teacher attention, and as I have progressed through these past weeks, I feel comfortable using the primary settling techniques like the bell and teacher-student response sayings (1,2 eyes on you etc). I am learning well by watching Hanna teach her class and really appreciate the guidance that you both have been giving me. I feel that I have gained valuable insight into classroom management of the primary grades. (Grade seven is still my favourite though ☺ )

I love making lesson plans! I feel that my courses have taught me many valuable details about making formal lesson plans and I find them enjoyable to create. I am enthusiastic as I envision how the class will react to the lesson. By running through the scenario in my mind, I have caught a few issues and gone back to edit the plan. Although I was somewhat restricted for this practicum, I found it was an excellent guideline to have the topic set by my teacher mentor. I put my own personal twist into my hooks and closures (thank you, Alanna, for the idea on the Spelling closure activity).

By acting out the lesson in my head as I write it, I find that I am really thinking about how the students will learn from the lesson. Is the hook encouraging? Will the activity set them up for success in their learning? Does it encompass diverse learning styles and Aboriginal content? As I reflect on the four lessons that I taught at Juniper Ridge Elementary, I realize there are some ideas that I could have used to better incorporate Aboriginal content. For example, I had a lesson that talked about the spelling word “cake”. Afterwards, I thought that I could have discussed how cake is often related to celebrations, and that Potlach is an Aboriginal celebration. Bannock is also like a little cake. These connections and discussions to First Peoples Principles of Learning are something that I am working to improve upon.

The most valuable connection of theory to practice is, that even in the short time I was with my practicum class, the concept of “getting to know your students” is of vital importance if they are to succeed in their learning and go through school with a positive mindset.