Reflective Journal 2

Donri Helmer, Cohort 1

Assignment: Grade 1, Juniper Ridge Elementary

Teacher Mentor: Hanna Storozak

*I want to comment on the First Nations welcome song that I mentioned in my last Journal. The school sings it on Wednesdays, as part of "Welcome Wednesday." The students are also to wave at each other in the hallway as part of this weekly event.*

The last two weeks of practicum were special because I was able to teach! It was a comforting feeling to be back in front of a class again. I am impressed with how Hanna has established a routine with her students. They know how the days are planned out, and they are very organized as a result. Posting a visible schedule is a fundamental teaching goal! I know that my grade seven students relied on my daily schedule, but it was fascinating to see primary students appreciate the same system. You are never too young to be organized!

Hanna liked my lesson plans. She gave us specific guidelines for the lessons that she wanted Celeste and me to teach, so it was relatively easy to create them. However, it did restrict freedom and creativity a little. I decided to create a word puzzle game as a hook. Hanna loved it and allowed me to use it as the opening of my lesson. The kids had fun, and we still were able to complete the regular spelling activities.

One thing that I have learned is to use the "settling techniques" quite often with the primary grades. Hanna likes to keep them focused, and she has taught them several techniques that the students are quite responsive to, such as "one, two, eyes on you." I had methods for my grade sevens, but the primary ones are a little different! Besides new classroom management techniques, I have acquired some fun activities to add to my teacher, toolbox. The TOC who was in for Hanna this Wednesday introduced me to "Go Noodle" for DPA activities. The kids loved it! I have used a version of "Just Dance" for intermediate students; I was surprised that it was the boys in my class who barely stopped dancing to take a break! Those little motion breaks are healthy for students of any age.

 I appreciate all of the positive feedback that Hanna gave in my observation report. She is lovely to work with, and it so encouraging. It is apparent that she wants us to succeed, and her mentorship has been of incredible value to me as a teacher candidate.