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ED200 – Introduction to Education

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Learning Activity V

After asking the school secretary, I came up with the following numbers for Smith Center High School.

1. What is the latest enrollment of your building? – 183 students (this number includes both junior high and high school students).
2. Break this down (disaggregate) by race. – The race ratio is 1/182. There is currently only one African-American student attending, and no students of other ethnicities. The remaining 182 are Caucasian.
3. What are the percentages of students on free lunch and reduced lunch prices? – Throughout the junior high and high school, there are 128 students on the full-priced meal block, 23 students who pay reduced price for their lunches, and 32 receive free meals.

My school is one that is fairly typical of northeastern Kansas, with little diversity in race and not a great number of children living in total poverty. The surrounding community is a small, tightknit group of about 2,000 people. The high school is 2A, with combined numbers from the Junior High coming to 183 students. The socioeconomic status of the community is fairly stable, from lower-middle to upper-middle class citizens, with relatively few deviating from that norm. The entire community shows great support for the school, particularly athletics, seeing as how Smith Center High School is known for their superior athletes. There is also an abundance of support shown to the academic side as well, from donations towards the building to the myriad of local scholarships that are offered.

The classroom itself is situated nicely, right at the front of the building. There are two wings of the school, one for the high school students and one for the junior high population, so the hallways are less noisy than if the two levels of students were mixed. The classroom itself does not offer much in the ways of technology at disposal except for the teacher’s computer and phone, but the library as well as the computer lab is only a short walk away. The classroom is arranged in five rows of five, with each of the desks facing the whiteboard, which is the focal point of the classroom. There are not any objects blocking the whiteboard for the students either – Mrs. Molzahn has a movable pedestal she uses to teach from. Little decorations make the room exciting and homey, but they certainly are not so overpowering as to be distracting to the students. The classroom rules are fairly standard – there are no cell phones, no food or drink (other than water), no excessive talking, etc. There are also no assigned seating arrangements, but the students tend to always sit by the same people. There are no specific patterns to the way students group up, but there is no apparent discrimination against others because of race, age, gender, or socioeconomic status; they all tend to get along for the most part.

The above information about the surrounding community, school, and classroom do have some implications for the style of teaching used in the classroom, and I believe that these are, for the most part, positive. Whenever a fellow student is struggling with an assignment, particularly a student with special needs, most of the kids are willing to step up and help them figure it out. This reflects on the way they group together, with no apparent schism between social classes or genders. This makes for easier teaching, particularly if there are students that need more assistance than usual. Because most students live in a household where there are not many financial problems, they are more likely to come to school more often and work harder on outside-of-class-time homework, simply because they have a comfortable environment to go home to. Those few students that are integrated into a household with money issues seem to attend school much more irregularly than those with no problems. This fact makes the teacher’s job easier – trying to catch a student up on missed assignments not only takes away from valuable class time, but there are also students that will not be able to participate in class discussion.

As far as I was made aware, there is not much of a problem present with the lack of minorities living in the Smith Center area. The one African-American student is always included in activities, never gets made fun of, and has a popular circle of friends. The same goes with the special needs students; each and every one of them has found his/her place in the school, and all are content with the student body. In my experience at Smith Center, I have yet to witness an instance of bullying, which cannot be said of every school, for certain.

Overall, the contextual factors of Smith Center High School, even though they are estranged from other large cities and do not have a big minority population, their school is highly successful. I think it would be safe to say that these factors have even made it easier to be a teacher at Smith Center High School, not only because of their willingness to accept others that are different, but because there is such a sense of community within the town and the school. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with these kids.