

Modern Considerations

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Professor Lauren McMillan was a wonderful example to interpret as a young, secondary education teacher with quality management skills and a knack for building positive student-teacher relationships. I am very glad I was chosen to visit her classroom, and after taking quite a large amount of quality notes, will move forward in my profession with new ideas on how to handle my own future classrooms.

When I entered her class, her students were already divided into groups to discuss sections of the novel *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. Right away I noticed a set of instructions on the projected screen, explaining the exact expectations of what they were to discuss and also what they needed to have prepared for the end of class as they transitioned from their small groups to a 'fishbowl' discussion. The fishbowl discussion involved the entire class; they circled the classroom and were required to all speak. They graded themselves on how much they participated by writing the questions they asked and the part of discussion they provided, taking note of how complicated the answers were and how open-ended the questions were so they were not able to get away with only saying a few words. Most of the class ended up contributing to the conversation, some of them having to be encouraged to do so. One or two students refused to contribute, but Ms. McMillan never called anyone out directly. She spoke to at least one after class, mostly encouraging him to at least say one thing next for the next fishbowl. I like how she handled it, not wanting to pressure him too hard while still letting him know it was not alright to refuse to contribute.

Her second class was the same content, but because of their block scheduling, they were at a different point in the unit. They watched a documentary based on a location in the book and then she read some of the book to them after. I took note of her wandering around the room as

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she did so. Her proximity strategy not only helped keep students from goofing off, but it helped change the location of her voice to assist with attention spans. When the class was set to read on their own, two students were caught messing with their phones. She tried to get one to go find a new book to read and he refused to; the situation ended with her walking away. I later found out that she continuously having issues with him and was currently trying to figure out to get him to engage as he was one of those students that does not care if he fails the class. The second student on his phone, she was able to be harsher with him, and after the serious conversation, they changed the subject to something more casual. She claimed to have a very good relationship with him and was able to push him more. Ms. McMillan really seemed to understand her personal relationships with her students and valued building them. Regarding cell phones, her procedures were for her students to put them in a designated area, but there was some sort of move in classrooms or schedule which prevented her from implementing it with that specific class at that time.

The environment was a bit sterile, but being a new room for her and a newer school in general, she was already trying her best to decorate her room with inspirational and educational sayings to brighten it up. Legacy High School is a school full of many modern ideas compared to what I grew up with. Some of the chairs allowed you to rock in them a bit, helping with students who needed to move. There were study modules in the hallways and a lounge area for a change of scenery for studying. The most notable detail to me was the amount of glass everywhere, including tiny glass garage doors that opened in most rooms to create an even more spacial feeling. When I was able to ask her questions, I immediately inquired about safety. She was not surprised at my thoughts, and explained that some schools were moving away from lockdowns in

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general, and if there was a breach in the building, the students were to leave the building to the nearest safe location. I am not sure I entirely agree with all of the glass and the mass chaos that could produce versus a lockdown, but ignoring the thoughts of danger, I find Legacy to be really unique and quite a beautiful and innovative way to make the students feel more welcome.