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## Flex Hours Observation Paper

Doing flex hours was definitely a learning experience. I did my flex hours on my new job that I got in November: the After School Program of Springdale. I work with kids ranging from Pre-K to 5th grade, that being said it started off hectic because I haven't dealt with numerous kids at once. I feel that I will benefit from this because I will be more experienced in managing behavior. Although the Coronavirus pandemic has caused most observations to be done virtually, my job is in-person with CDC guidelines. I am fortunate to have this opportunity and continue to learn from it. Working for the After School Program also gives me flexibility within the company and other opportunities in the Springdale School District.

I did my observations at two different locations the demographics and climate. My first observation took place at Helen Tyson Middle School, there was a lot of diversity among the students and they were between the grades of Pre-k to 7th grade. The students' ethnicities vary from White, African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islanders. On the day of my observation, there were 109 students present, and gender was approximately evenly distributed. My second observation took place at Knapp Elementary School, it was also diverse but there were more White students. This school has students that were in pre-k to 5th grade, there were 27 students present that day. Around half of the students at this location were in Pre-k, and there are more girls than boys.

The locations have similarities as well, such as both schools utilize the cafeteria and the gym, the rapport between staff and students, socioeconomic backgrounds, and the climate of the program. The program uses cafeterias for students to eat, do homework, and play with toys/electronics whereas the gym is used for gross motor activities. Most students are in the afterschool program because they have working-class parents that can't afford babysitters. Since most of the students spend the majority of their days at school, that is where they learn how to communicate and how to behave which can make it harder on staff and teachers. The overall climate of the program is very energetic and tends to get loud.

Itinerary and rules are the same in the program despite the location. There is an organizational hierarchy in the After School Program. For example, the program has a Director,

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assistant directors, site supervisors, and staff. I am a staff member which means I only deal with the students, not the parents (that'd be the site supervisor's job). It is my job to supervise the students and guide activities. The day starts with me getting the toys or balls out in different grade zones in the gym. We put them in zones according to grade because it makes tracing easier if a student contracts covid-19. After playtime, they eat snack, and after snack they have the option between doing homework, playing with toys/electronics, or playing in the gym. Students always have to be supervised by a staff member. In fact, we have ratios in place; 1 staff member:12 pre-k students and 1 staff member:18 kinder&up students. If students need to use the restroom I have to stand outside of the restroom because they need to be supervised.

Behavior management is crucial in this job. Students in the after school program are usually free to play and converse with their peers from the time they get out of school (2 pm) to the time they get picked up (6 pm). Since the only structure the program has in place is to make sure the students remain with their age group, it is very difficult to manage because the kids are there to have fun. There is always drama between students, students not wanting to share toys, students throwing tantrums because they want to go home, and more. The program advises all staff members to use positive reinforcement when disciplining students but that is very broad so you learn things as you go. Staff members are allowed to put students in timeout, make them read as punishment, and talk to their parents if the behavior persists. Although those may work, I've learned that it is more effective to be patient, not to take things personally, and to be proactive rather than reactive. What I mean by that is, students can get on your nerves but as long as you remain patient and don't give them the reaction they're looking for they'll stop. If they continue to misbehave do not demand compliance, instead, take a deep breath and figure out how to reduce the problem instead of escalating it. For example, there was a group of 2nd grade girls that are consistently arguing, I'm not going to go up to the group and ask what's wrong because then I'll have a bunch of little girls trying to talk over each other which causes more problems. I approach this problem by talking to the girls individually and then I decide whether they should sit separately for the rest of the day or get them to do an activity that includes all of them so no one feels secluded. It is important to show the students that you are there to supervise them and encourage positive behavior. They should know to respect you and this is done by setting boundaries.

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All students get treated the same and have access to the same resources. I'd say it is professional for the staff because there's a "Minimum Licensing Requirements" book with all the rules which we abide by.

These experiences have taught me how stressful it is to not be prepared. I have an advantage when I become a teacher because I will have experience managing behavior and large groups of students. I'm learning how to set the boundary of being the instructor/supervisor and being their friend. I am supposed to establish trust with the students but I have to make sure that I don't act like a friend, but more like a respected mentor.