Field Experience
101
2018-2019
In the field, SJU pre-service teachers are expected to:

- *Be* participant observers
- *Document* what they see and do
- *Reflect* critically on their experiences
What does it mean to be a participant observer??
A Participant Observer:

Observes AND participates in a learning community

The learning community:

- Includes students, cooperating teachers, support teachers/staff, school staff, school administrators, parents, and anyone else who may be involved with the school
- Exists inside of and outside of the classroom walls- in hallways, auditoriums, cafeterias, playgrounds/fields, parking lots, etc.
During field...

Your job is to:

- **GO...EVERY SINGLE WEEK.**
- **Observe**
  - The classroom setup/environment
  - Teaching methods/lessons/practices
  - Interactions in (or outside of) the classroom
  - Student behavior(s)
- **Participate**
  - Build relationships
  - Get to know your cooperating teacher(s)
  - Help when needed or asked, but also volunteer and take initiative
  - Interact with students individually or in small groups
As a participant observer.....

**YES:**
- To smiling
- To enjoying this experience
- To sitting, standing, kneeling, crouching, clapping, singing... inside of and outside of the classroom
- To dividing your time by spending some of it looking at the whole environment and some of it conducting more targeted observations
- To helping/supporting your cooperating teacher(s)
- To asking thoughtful questions
- To engaging all students
- To supporting all students

**YIKES:**
- To frowning, scowling, eye rolling, etc..
- To sitting....the whole time...in the back...staring at a computer or cell phone
- To looking at only aspects of the environment required to complete your course assignments
- To ignoring and/or nagging your cooperating teacher(s)
- To asking thoughtless (or thoughtful) questions at inconvenient times
- To distracting students
- To giving all of your attention to only those students you “like”
How do I *document* what I see and do during field??
To Document:

Jot to Jog

During field: jot down quick/short notes about what you are seeing and doing; these will jog your memory later

Log to Journal

Within HOURS of field: review the notes you jotted down to jog the memories of what you saw and did that day; write or type more detailed comprehensive notes (your “field notes”) in a journal
Right before the class’s transition from centers to read aloud, around 9:45 AM, Mrs. Carter called me over to her desk and asked if I could sit on the rug with Juan and Rachel. She explained that they were having trouble “getting along” this morning and she could use my help. As soon as the class was seated on the rug, I knelt between Juan and Rachel, asking if I could sit between them. Both smiled and nodded so I asked them to scoot over, positioning myself in the middle. As Mrs. Carter read the day’s story, Rachel periodically patted my arm, but otherwise kept her eyes forward. Juan turned to speak to his neighbor Desean on a few occasions. Once the story was over and the class transitioned to gym, I reported to Mrs. Carter that I had not witnessed any interaction at all between Juan and Rachel during read aloud.
YES:

During field:
- To using a pen/pencil and sticky notes, a clipboard, a pocket-size notebook, index cards on a keyring, etc. to jot notes down quickly

After field:
- To keeping a physical or electronic “journal” for your detailed field notes
- To using the van time on the way back to start your field notes before finishing them later that day
- To keeping both sets of notes (the quick and the detailed) for future reference and reflection

YIKES:

During field:
- To using your phone to jot down notes… be present, stay present
- To relying only on your memory and/or making stuff up

After field:
- To not transferring your notes into any kind of a journal and/or making stuff up
- To waiting more than a few hours to write up your field notes
- To throwing away any of your notes…you never know when you’ll need them
What is critical reflection and why is it important?
Critical Reflection….

What it is
& Why it’s important

What?
- An ongoing process, not a one-time or isolated event
- Ties together what you are learning in the university classroom and what you are experiencing in the field so you can construct new knowledge and engage in new behaviors
- Requires examining the beliefs and assumptions you hold, which can feel uncomfortable

Why?
“We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience.”

– John Dewey
In critical reflection.....

YES:
- To having a field notes section and a reflection section of your journal
- To consistently making connections between field experiences and coursework and visa versa
- To taking the time to “sit with” your thoughts, feelings, questions, etc.
- To making critical reflection a routine practice
- To being honest with yourself by challenging your thinking, interrogating your assumptions, asking questions, and acknowledging what you don’t yet know or understand

YIKES:
- To in no way distinguishing between what is a field note and what is a reflection
- To keeping the field in the field and to keeping coursework in the classroom
- To rushing through reflection because you need to turn something in
- To reflecting only when it’s required or when you are told to
- To telling your professor what you think they want to hear...