LEAD Reflection

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At Walkerville, I was working with Anna LaPorte as my LEAD teacher associate. I was involved in assisting a credit recovery classroom. I spent period 1 in the credit recovery class working with students who needed additional academic help. This experience allowed me to connect with students who were at-risk of not graduating or falling behind in their credits. This experience allowed me to focus less on content, as I was not teaching a particular course, but instead allowed me to work individually with students seeking help. The classroom environment was set up in a way where all students felt comfortable. I engaged in daily table talks with the students, where we discussed topics in a proper, respectful way. This allowed the students to engage in conversation with peers in a mature way that would help prepare them for job interviews or interactions with other adults. As a class, the students were very welcoming to me in the classroom and were very open to allowing me to help them with academics. My reluctance came when faced with subjects I was not familiar with, but the students had exceptional patients as I myself tried to learn the material alongside them. We were able to collaboratively learn the material and work together. In my five weeks there, I had one student finish their credit and therefore was going to graduate in June. I had four others receive their credits. It was amazing to see their satisfaction and pride in their work when they completed a credit. My second period for LEAD was spent with the SST/LST in the LST room. For the first few weeks at Walkerville this placement I assisted Anna LaPorte in creating packages for grade 10 students with OSSLT information. I also marked the practice tests that were completed before my arrival. When this was done, I spent this period in the LST room, helping students who walked in needed help with assignments. I, again, was faced with many challenges as students with content areas out of my expertise needed help but they were all very patient with me as I assisted them. I also worked alongside Mrs. LaPorte in planning and implementing Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test preparation practice exams and workshops after we reviewed the results of the practice tests. I aided administration in mailing the letters home to parents, as well as speaking to students if they were in unique situations writing the OSSLT (such as a grade 9 homeroom or with an IEP). I also participated in the Professional Learning Community program that Walkerville has. I did this alongside my associate. We participated in Wednesday Warriors in which staff members organize students to play sports. The weeks I was there I observed soccer and basketball. The teams are made as students arrive and change on a weekly basis, there is no commitment involved. The sports also change on a weekly basis or on student preference. I observed the students playing the sports and assisted in sorting teams and keeping score.

As of yet, my LEAD associate teacher had not provided any feedback formally, though she has commented on the increased confidence in the way I carry myself within the school and in my interactions with students. I believe I continued to grow in the confidence area as I became more comfortable in the school and in the LST room.

One area of strength was developing my patience with students. I faced very defiant students who disliked me as a teacher and that was both discouraging and draining. I had to take time to personally disconnect from the students when I got home and though this posed as a struggle for me, I found myself being overly invested with students and their perspectives of me. I think this development of patience has helped me when working with defiant students. One area of improvement would be to provide my continued support outside the school. Walkerville provides many extra curricular homework help and I believe the benefit would be great if I encouraged students I worked with to stay for additional help academically.

In terms of my role as a LEAD candidate, I faced many struggles. I initially struggled with the balance that comes with having to juggle my teaching periods and SST periods along with lesson prepping and personal additional expectations, outside of school. Initially placement was overwhelming and with LEAD I was faced with balancing many aspects. Once I found a groove of what I needed to do and found good time management techniques, I was able to find a comfortable way of going about my day that allowed me to get all my work accomplished. I realized I needed to take a backseat in some extra curricular activities and lessened my workload and that allowed me to focus more on my teaching career. Another struggle I faced was working with students that I did not know personally. I struggled with building a rapport with these students in a short period of time. Unlike my teaching classes I did not get time to know the students I worked with during LEAD on a deeper, personal level. I worked with select students a various number of times, but others I only worked with once. This made it difficult to build a trusting rapport with them, but once I did I was able to see great accomplishments getting done. The students were so friendly and welcoming to me as a student teacher and were patient while I tried to learn their material or specific subject area. I was able to apply many skills learned in the faculty to content areas outside of my expertise.

At Walkerville the next steps can include continued support in the credit recovery class, and expanding my assistance to administration, guidance and other areas of the school needing support. Further steps this year are to continue volunteering my time and assisting with credit rescue days as the semester comes to an end.

From the LEAD course I gained an in-depth knowledge of the issues students of today face. This includes issues surrounding metal health and LGBTQ rights. I really liked having an expert come in on a particular content or area as I felt they were able to give good insight on the topics. I did experience a student cutting on placement so I felt that the talk by Dr. Pyke really prepared me for that.

To improve semester 1 it would be beneficial to do more team building and personal experience activities in the first few classes. Though we only meet once a week, it would have benefited getting to know more students in LEAD and being able to network with students I do not encounter in other classes. As LEAD looks different in all schools, it would have been nice to speak more personally and informally with other students on their experience in LEAD and seek advice from those students while sharing personal stories. More discussion-based lectures would have improved the first semester.

In the remaining two semesters of the LEAD program I would like to see continued guest speakers, as their expertise was very insightful. I believe case study based activities would also benefit the course as it is helpful to feel prepared to encounter an activity. I also really enjoyed the TPSR workshop and other sorts of team building physical activities as those broke away from traditional classroom methods but I felt that learning was optimal.