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Exit statement
Teaching Intern: Brittany Tincher
April 25, 2014

To Whom It May Concern;

Brittany Tincher has successfully completed her student teaching with Shanna Middleton's kindergarten class at Wines Elementary School in Ann Arbor. In the fall term she spent a day and a half each week in this classroom, and since January she has been there full time. I have served as Brittany's field instructor during this entire school year. At first Brittany and I co-observed her mentor teacher, then we co-planned her early lessons, and I observed and debriefed her teaching. We also met in a seminar every two weeks with the other five interns placed at Wines for the whole school year.

Starting in January Brittany ramped up her role in the classroom, taking on increasing responsibility for planning and teaching. She took over as lead teacher for over two weeks, finishing in April. After she finished her lead teaching she was asked to take a long-term substitute position at Lawton Elementary School in a kindergarten classroom.

Brittany brings energy, enthusiasm, and vibrant collegiality to her work as a teacher. Her kindergartners know her, trust her, and eagerly take part in their learning experiences with her, from their morning meetings, to daily learning centers, and whole class activities. Brittany carefully plans both challenging and engaging activities and she frequently keeps detailed assessment records as she observes and assists her students in their efforts. She has established classroom routines that provide order and predictable security for her students, as well as keeping transitions running smoothly.

Following the morning meeting in Brittany's classroom, students select learning centers from a list drawn on the front board. The learning centers include a variety of activities that range in combination of play and academic pursuits, as well as a snack table. Each student has a name magnet and each station has a number showing the maximum number of students who may be there at one time. Students place their magnet beneath the learning center "name" they have chosen and they move the magnet when they change centers.

Some of the learning centers are "star jobs" indicating that they include a task that must be completed before the end of the day. Some star jobs have a teacher or adult volunteer assistant. In some cases, Brittany calls specific students to work at a particular star job with her.

The star jobs are focused academic activities that range from reading groups to writing tasks and math, science, or social studies activities. On one day students were measuring objects in the classroom with their own feet, and on another day they measured with rulers, and then compared the results of the two approaches. These small group "star job" experiences provide Brittany with an opportunity to take instruction she has given to the whole class, and give students some guided practice, as well as allowing her to probe individuals for their understanding. She also uses these smaller group settings to observe individuals as they grapple with new concepts. Very often she is recording assessment data on a clipboard at the same time. Brittany compiles her informal assessments in valuable performance records that track student progress over time.

Brittany is intensely interested in the learning and development of lower elementary students. She has taken full advantage of her mentor teacher's expertise in considering her own instructional choices and trying out new ideas. She teams with the support staff who work with the students in her class with special needs, including one student with Down Syndrome whose needs are a significant consideration every day. Brittany also has teamed with the two other kindergarten teachers and another kindergarten intern at Wines in planning this year. This collegial relationship has produced a synergy that benefits the learning of all students in their classes.

Brittany uses her assessments to guide her instructional decisions. Some assessments she administered as an "exit ticket" with a written task at the close of a lesson. As Brittany moved toward planning sequences of lessons within a unit of study instead of isolated days she still maintained flexibility in making adjustments to subsequent instruction based on what her students indicated they had learned.

During her student teaching Brittany designed and taught a unit on the needs of pets to support the science learning goal of identifying the needs of living things. The unit also supports learning goals in reading, writing, and social studies. Students shared their personal knowledge about pet needs and they gleaned additional ideas from class read-alouds. They even took a field trip to the local humane society, an experience that made a huge impression on the students. Brittany harnessed the excitement from their trip and focused their sharing by having each student make an adoption brochure for a specific cat or dog from the shelter. The shelter contributed pet photos and names, and the students wrote introductory biographies, three needs of the pet, and fun facts for their own brochures. The students also used KidPix software in the computer lab to make posters of pet needs to encourage people (such as their parents) to donate items to the Humane Society. A therapy dog and police dog visited the classroom, adding a view of not only what pets need, but special jobs pets do for us.

Like a good teacher, Brittany draws connections through her lessons between science, math, social studies, and reading and writing activities. It is not unusual for her to pause in reading out loud to say, "Oh my goodness! What does this remind you of?" She uses her informal observations and careful assessment notes to guide her planning and adjust her focus from day to day. Her students are at a wide range of achievement levels and she is ready to meet each of them with appropriate challenges.

Brittany is punctual and dependable. She gets her work done on time, and is organized and ready for the day. She is flexible and manages sudden changes in the daily schedule with grace and flexibility. She is cheerful, upbeat, and fun. She takes advantage of every professional development opportunity and is ready to share what she learns with her peers. She is ready to take on her own classroom and will be a valued member of the school community that she joins.

Sincerely,

Susan Kielb
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