

Bethany Houston
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Setting and Context Narrative
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Thompson Valley High School(TVHS), “Home of the Eagles”, serves the Loveland community of 9th-12th grade students within the Thompson Valley School District. It’s a medium-sized school, with gridded hallways in a one-story building. While most of my Colorado experiences have been local to Fort Collins, getting to know the Loveland area also makes it easier to understand the students I encounter at TVHS. Loveland seems to be near enough to Fort Collins for shopping and outdoor trips, but the community has unique shops and restaurants of their own. Students have options to walk from nearby neighborhoods, drive themselves, ride bikes, be dropped off by guardians, or receive bus service. Students also seem to have the opportunity to go off-campus for lunch period, which they seem to enjoy having the freedom to do.

Student demographics for TVHS seem to align with Northern Colorado demographics averages. According to census data for the school district, student racial and ethnicity makeup is as follows: *“71% of students are White, 23% of students are Hispanic, 4% of students are Two or more races, 1% of students are Asian, and 1% of students are Black.”* There seems to be a good balance of male and female teachers, and most of the teachers I’ve seen were white as well. I do think of some educational readings, that report students tend to learn and engage better with teachers that look like themselves. While this might not be possible for some BIPOC students at TVHS, the teachers I’ve observed *do* seem to be using culturally responsive teaching methods.

The population of TVHS reminds me of my own high school size, which was small enough to know almost all of my graduating class, while also having a variety of what classmates I saw in each classroom. Each grade size is around 250 students, while the overall student body of TVHS is about 1,025. The local area has three other high schools, with Mountain View and Loveland High being the other possibilities in town. Mountain View is the newest, and Loveland is the oldest and most well-known for Loveland. While TVHS might be considered the “middle child,” of the three schools, they excel in art programs, having a great performing arts program, and having success in swimming and wrestling competitions. The school also is the only one of the three that has an automotive garage, and also has the preferred agricultural program for those heading to Ag colleges. TVHS also happens to have the most AP class opportunities in the area.

The high school students I’ve observed, definitely seem to have a sense of ownership of the shared space. TVHS’s mission statement is to “*strive to be #TVSTRONG by showing Strength, participating in Teamwork, being Respectful, Open-minded, and Noble, and moving in a positive direction by setting and achieving Goals.*” I agree that the teachers I have interacted with, are upholding this mission. I can see the teamwork and goal setting in the student’s day-to-day class work.

There are a variety of opportunities for students of all abilities, and assistance for students with specific educational needs. I haven’t been in any of the integrated services classrooms, but through talking with teachers and other practicum students, there seem to be beneficial classes for students who need more emotional or behavioral help from the school. TVHS also has

classes for students to explore more fun and entertaining topics not usually covered in standard core classes, like film studies, video games, and more.

TVHS has a good website for parents and guardians to follow student activities and news. I haven't personally observed any parent involvement at school, but I think it's much rarer to see involved parents at the high school level, compared to elementary and middle school. TVHS's site has contact information for clubs like DECA, Future Farmers of America, Science Olympiad, Theater and Yearbook just to name a few. As a future art teacher, I want to see if there is an active after-school art club that I might be able to volunteer with, or get some of my required hours in with. I hope to run or help facilitate some after school art activities for students.

The classroom I am observing and participating in is pre-AP art. It has an extremely small class size, compared to the other art classes, (I asked the student teacher,). There are about 10 students total, and they are all pretty quiet and keep to themselves. They are mostly sophomores and juniors, with one or two seniors. During the first two weeks, it was difficult to get to know them, but finally some of the students have started getting used to me and the other CSU student being in the classroom and offering help. It's essentially an elective class, so all the students want to be there. The engagement is pretty high, while there are one or two students that occasionally get distracted with cellphone apps or videos. Eventually, even the disengaged students still come around and participate in some great artmaking. I think it's not necessarily that the students don't want to talk, but that I need to pick better conversation starters, or more interesting ways of asking them questions about the art they're working on. There are always going to be students that want to talk and share with us CSU students, and I have to make sure

that those excited students aren't monopolizing my time, and I am trying to get to know all the students equally.

The teacher, Crawford, has an easy-going and laid back attitude that the students really seem to appreciate and work well with. No one ignores him when he has requests, most students watch his demos attentively, and they all seem to be comfortable enough to ask him questions if they are struggling with something. I hope to be able to have a classroom climate like this one—but I know it certainly comes with lots of trial-and-error, and experience with teaching that just takes time.

The physical environment of the art room is a standard box shape, with two, long rows of drafting tables and stools. There is actually another art room shared by a moving wall, where the metals/sculpture classes happen. I have spent most of my time these past weeks with the drawing and 2d art teacher. I've noticed some students move back and forth between the two art rooms, to talk with fellow art classmates/friends, or check on a project they have in the other class during another period. There is a closet filled to the brim with art supplies, and tons of cabinets and drawers throughout the room filled with even more reference materials or drawing supplies. I have no idea where anything is, since I am still getting used to the layout, but all the students move around the room, grabbing what they need, without a second thought. The students all clean up their desks at the end of class, which is a great standard for students to keep up in a room that could easily get so chaotic and messy. Another aspect of the classroom that I like, is that there are tons of art books for students to look through for inspiration. Even art is a class based in literacy, and students benefit from the integration of their other core classes into the art space.

Demos and lectures from the teacher are short, so students can maximize their time working on projects. Crawford is always seated at the front of the class at a desk, and has a magnifying projector screen to show students what he's working on. He doesn't walk around the classroom much, but the student come up to him with questions throughout the class period. It seems to be a good system for what those students need.

Overall, I have enjoyed working with the TVHS students so far. The students sometimes need some prompting to have a conversation with me, but I am figuring out what interests them and what kind of questions I need to ask them to facilitate a good discussion. I particularly enjoy working one-on-one with any student that wants me to help with. I also really enjoy having discussions in small groups. It will be interesting to see if I can hold the attention of a full class for a lesson. It seems a little intimidating every time I need to teach something to a whole group, but I think it will be easier each time. I am very curious to see how the more full art classes flow compared to the small AP art class, and maybe I can try and figure out some time to go in and see the class during a different time of day. I wonder how different the class acts/feels at the very end of the day compared to our usual early-morning observations.