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EDUC450
Reflection: School Meeting
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I had the chance to sit in on parent-teacher conferences on a weekday evening. Our mentor teacher, Mr. Crawford, encouraged us to attend and see what it was like. It was also a nice “send-off” for Ms. Pefferman (Syd) who was one of our fellow art ed classmates. This was her last day at Thompson Valley, since she was moving on to her early-childhood portion of student teaching. It was nice to watch her lead the conferences, with the support of Crawford, and envision what it would be like for my own future conferencing.

I particularly liked how all of the teachers were available in a large square set up, as soon as parents and students entered the building. I mentioned how I thought it was nice that parents could have easy access to all of their child’s teachers in one room. I did think it was funny (in a dark way) that Mr. Crawford mentioned it was also a safety precaution for the teachers, since some parent interactions had gotten heated in the past, and having conferences out in the open would mean a safer experience for everyone. I had no idea that would even be something to consider, but once it was said, I completely understand, and as unfortunate as it seemed, I like that the school supports teachers in these considerations.

While subjects like English, Math, and Science might have the most parent involvement, our art mentor did have quite a few parents stop by for a talk. Sydney did an excellent job of taking over conference responsibilities, and I appreciated being able to sit in and observe. Another art ed student, Madison Johnson was also student teaching for the graphic design teacher, so we asked how her conference duties were going.

With Crawford's help, Syd had a really good pattern of questions for students, and ways to show the caregivers how they are doing in school. She asked students to name some things they felt were going really well in the class, followed by something they felt like might not be going as well as they hoped. Then, she would ask them how they might be able to recover missing assignments, lower grades, attention issues, and together they would work out a short plan for the rest of the school year. The parents seemed very happy to see this conversation play out, and the students all seemed to walk away in good moods. I can see why it's beneficial to start with student successes, and having the students name their own successes, which the teacher can then follow up with our own classroom-success observations. Students also benefit from having actionable plans to improve their grades, or how to keep doing well in the class as the semester progresses.

I thought the conferences were a great insight. I went in to the meeting with almost no expectations. I only had very old and fuzzy memories of my own conferences, and appreciated the update. I also like how the mentor teacher had the student teacher take over those duties, which showed the kind of great connections student teachers can make with their students even in such a short amount of time.