

Principles of Teaching

By: Kaylani Overstreet

The teaching program has existed at Seneca High school since 2011 with the hiring of Ms. Adrian Layne, who began taking the program to new heights. Thanks to her, the program has been a huge success, and our young educators have benefited from it greatly. Ms. Layne is also our school's chapter leader for the FEA (Future Educators Association) program. She prepares our students well, and from that dedicated preparation our students have succeeded tremendously. Almost every year that Ms. Layne has been with us as our FEA director, more than one student has placed top three in the FEA competitions which are held every year. Without the qualities of dedication, hard work, and patience that Ms. Layne possesses, neither our teaching program, nor our FEA program would be where it is today—a success.

The teaching program requires four years for a single high school student. As freshman going into the program, they begin at level 1 of the program; sophomores at level 2, juniors at level 3, and seniors at level 4. However, there are some levels mixed with grades due to the fact that most students who aren't freshman enter the course later on in their high school career. It is best to start the course as a freshman and stay with it till one's senior year because at the final completion of the program, those who have completed all four levels will earn three to six hours of college credit. While that doesn't seem like much, it's still a huge reward, for any student striving to become a teacher.

Earning college credit is not the only reward students receive. Throughout the course students will have gained a tremendous amount of experience, which will ultimately benefit them in not only their teaching career, but for the rest of their life in any profession they choose. Students are taught how to write a resume, how to collaborate with peers and younger children, and how to collaborate with other teachers. As part of being in the teaching program the ideal goal is to teach students how to be effective teachers. While students are being taught in the classroom, they are also gaining experience through working with younger children. As one would imagine, we as practicing teachers take the knowledge we've learned in the classroom and apply it to our fieldwork in working with younger students.

A large requirement of the students enrolled in the program is to complete a teaching portfolio by the end of their senior year. This teaching portfolio consists of a student resume, autobiography, a reflection, and various pieces of student's lesson plans, tests and quizzes, as well as several other writing pieces that are completed throughout all four years. This teaching portfolio identifies the purpose of gathering four years of hard work and rewarding experience and putting it all together in one piece to be broadcasted to parents of students interested in the program, and to remind us why we joined the program in the first place. Its purpose is to also indicate to students the accomplishment they made in those four years. This portfolio can be displayed to colleges and work places, to "put in a good word" for the student, if you will. There's a story in particular of a girl who submitted her portfolio to the college she wanted to attend, and because of that wise decision she got a scholarship to that college. This portfolio is worked on over the four year course, so it's not all done in one setting at one time. Each year more pieces are added to perfect the portfolio even further.

Another requirement of the program is to create various, distinctive lesson plans of which we would teach in our field work or submit for a class requirement. Ms. Layne would allow us a little freedom on most of our lesson plans, and allow us to choose the grade and subject that we wanted to teach. I found these choices to be beneficial since I had more ideas for the subject and grade I wanted to teach versus having to teach elementary school students. I've decided I would like to teach high school or college level English. Submitting lesson plans for Junior English turned out to be my best.

At the first level of the program, students are being taught out of a text, and they begin their fieldwork at Goldsmith Elementary. When I was a freshman, each student was assigned a classroom of students to work with. For me, starting out the first several weeks, I only graded papers for my classroom's teacher. Thus I was pretty much an aid. Nevertheless I eventually began teaching the students, as that was a part of my grade and responsibility as a teacher in training. Once I started teaching, I graded the assignments I designed. This placement lasts for about twelve weeks. At the change of the trimester, the elementary students would come to our school building and meet us in the cafeteria. The plan worked a little differently this time. Four high school students were grouped together and accompanied five Goldsmith students. We had the same kids every other week. Our mission was to improve their math skills, and each group of high school students was responsible for one component of math. For example, my group was responsible for multiplication. That being said, with each group of Goldsmith students, we always taught them multiplication and we worked together as a group. Fieldwork lasted a class period and took place on Tuesdays and Thursdays of every week. That was my freshman year experience.

Moving on to the second level of the program, I was obviously a sophomore, and we studied out of a different text than we did at the first level. Our fieldwork would also be slightly different. For my class our fieldwork remained the same the entire year with no change except in students we worked with. A class would come over to our school, and each high school student was assigned one Goldsmith student to tutor on reading. Generally, our sessions consisted of helping them learn their spelling words and reading a book with them. We had different students each day we met. Fieldwork would also last a class period and take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This year would also be the year that we started working on our portfolios with more focus, attention and formatting.

Becoming a junior in high school and entering the third level of the program, we broke tradition and started teaching at another school while the first and second levels continue teaching at Goldsmith. We began teaching at Price Elementary, using the similar tactics we did at the first level; each high school student was assigned a classroom. I was assigned fifth graders and it was understood that I would mostly be teaching them writing. This year was a personal success for me and my fellow peers. While teaching at a new school would be different and something to get used to, it would give us a chance to gain new experience and work with new students that we hadn't worked with before. This decision was made because Price Elementary had heard of our success at Seneca with the teaching program and wanted to be a part of it. They heard about us prior to entering at the third level and had tried very hard to get our students to go to their school to teach. Ms. Layne took this opportunity to allow us to teach there, with us having the class for two class periods and teaching there Wednesday through Friday, allowing Monday and Tuesday for us to work on our classwork at school and also prepare lessons for our Price students. I enjoyed working with my Price students, and I wouldn't trade teaching them for anything.

Finally at the fourth level, which I am currently in now as a senior, things are more different than the three years past. As a senior in the program, one's job is to travel to another school to be present four days a week (Tuesday-Friday) the last two class periods of the day. Monday will be the only day we will remain at school completing any and all work assigned to us by Ms. Layne, in particular our portfolio. That time will also allow us to make lesson plans for our students. While we are gone to our assigned school for field work, Ms. Layne will also travel to each of our schools to not only grade us on our performance, but to ensure we are doing what is expected as experienced practicing teachers. Fieldwork throughout all four levels of the program is a huge part of the students' grade. At the fourth level we will finalize our portfolios and revise them accordingly for the last time.

Part of being in the education program or in the FEA program is doing a considerable amount of volunteer work which concern younger children. We volunteer our time to work in the childcare program in order to watch younger children so that parents can attend Parent-Teacher conferences and Open House. Another opportunity we have in the education program is promoting our program to the public with our personal testimonials. For example, last year I took part in the showcase of schools and talked to parents about our education program. At that point in time, in that very moment, I had never had such a greater feeling of pride and joy in my whole life. Being given the chance to talk about our school in a positive way was most rewarding. A few weeks later, I would speak at Open House to the parents of students who were interested in the education program. I had my portfolio on display for parents and students to look through, to get an idea of what is required. That night, while speaking to the parents, I had the same feeling I had at the showcase of schools, and while I wrote this article that feeling appeared again. I can't express enough how wonderful and beneficial the program is. I'm proud of being a part of the Seneca education program as well as the FEA program, and I am proud to be a Seneca Redhawk!