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Teachers Make the Difference: Accessing a Black Woman's Specific Funds of Knowledge to make a Difference in the Classroom

Morgan Goodman

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TEACHERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE: ACCESSING A BLACK WOMAN'S SPECIFIC
FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Morgan Siobhan Goodman

Claremont Graduate University

Teacher Education Program

DEDICATION

To my K-12 teachers and CGU Teacher Education mentors Nicole Flores and Rachel Camacho who showed me the true POWER of moments, who fostered my love for learning and showed me what it meant to teach and enjoy what you do.

To my master teacher Jennifer Jensen, who instilled a sense of pride in loving what you do, and taught me that noise in the classroom, when done right, shows the level of engagement and love for learning that every student should experience. Thank you for taking me under your wing and loving me through my errors, comforting me through my losses, and being living proof that teaching is the most fulfilling job in the world.

To my boss, new mentor and first principal, Ann O'Connor. Words cannot express how much it means to me to have had a professor and boss like you who has corrected me when I was wrong, allowed me to vent my frustrations and anger toward an educational system that still has a lot of improving to do to support students who look like me, supported me when I felt like giving up, and has given me the tools to see that trusting my gut inside the classroom has been the difference between being a good teacher and being a great teacher. Your kind words, safe space of an office and overall motivation to do bigger and better things for my students will forever be remembered. Thank you.

To my new teacher support team/colleagues at Chaparral Elementary School, thank you for your many talks, words of wisdom, tear filled conversations and classroom stop by's to check in on me and pep-talks on difficult students. You are constant role models to a new teacher like myself, and I am not sure you will ever understand the impact you have made on me.

To my students of room 27 (originally room 22), who have encouraged me to be the best teacher I can be. From finding ways to engage and educate you all, to the laughter and tears as we have experienced as we all make our way through fifth grade (in my case, again, in your case for the first and only time). I am forever grateful for your support, your kindness, your unwavering love and your ability to turn a down situation into a learning moment where laughter and curiosity reign and lead our discussions. You all inspire me to believe in the next generation of leaders and way makers in our nation. Our classroom is filled with the hope and generosity and laughter and joy that you put into it; you bring it to life, and I could not have done this without you. I am so excited to see what all of your individual next steps are, and I hope that I can be there to support you as you have been here to support me. Always remember, great teachers are made from great students, who inspire them to be their best. #room27familyforever.

To my mommy, here we are again! 3 years later, another masters, and the only difference between this one and the last one, is that this one was done with more grace and gratitude; all of which I can attribute to you. Thank you for being my constant inspiration and a woman who has made no bones about disrupting the norms of the academy by looking at the ways that we provide access those those who historically have been shut out of the very institutions who claim to want and need diversity. Thank you for lighting the fire 30 years ago, and slowly fanning the flames within me to be part of the change in education needed for so many.

To my incredible husband, without you I would have never started, let alone finished this program. You have been my constant support and the ground when it has felt like the world was falling from beneath me. You are the support I never knew I needed, and the husband I have always dreamt of and wanted. You have always been strong, and always been sure of the woman that I could be, and marrying you has been the best decision I have ever made. Thank you for being my best friend and my husband...I love you.

To the Black women who are succeeding off the successes and failures of the ancestors before us, those who have been inspired by the Nikki Giovanni's and Alice Walker's, as well as the mothers and grandmothers of the world. Who find passion in small details and see deep connections in the tiniest places. To the Black women who have been discouraged daily and are able to see God's communication and confirmation in what we are doing and the changes we are making in a multitude of ways. Through flowers, other people, an uncomfortable sense, a feeling of joy, goose bumps, a newfound talent, or an appreciation that we have acquired over time. To those who read poems and feel love, to those who see someone crying and feel loss, and to those who have been made, as I have, to believe that our emotional connection is a negative, when in reality it is what makes you the most powerful teacher to your students...this accomplishment and milestone in my life is for you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this ethnography was to examine the elements of my personal goals and aspirations of being an elementary school teacher with the real experience of teaching students within my classroom. Through the lens of an ethnography, and grounded in the research components of culturally inclusive education and, this thesis provides a critical and needed pedagogical approach to how teachers can make a difference in the lives of their students, and in the process learn that they are really the ones being taught.

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PREFACE

When I entered this program at Claremont Graduate University (CGU), I was impressed and inspired with the idea of completing an ethnographic narrative as my master's thesis; to be like Zora Neale Hurston, and evaluate a concept and a community and a people from the inside:

Hurston embraced anthropology's belief that rigorous and systematic training provided its practitioners with a unique vision of the world. And her metaphor of anthropology as a spy-glass, as an illuminating lens, still resonates today. But where she departed from convention was in her choice of subject matter. To study her own people as a native anthropologist ran counter to the prevailing intellectual winds. Further, her blurring of literary conventions with ethnographic data was a challenge of which she was keenly aware. Hurston's willingness to go against the grain and to experiment with new ethnographic styles and methods positions her as the foremother of what is today called interpretive anthropology, or the new ethnography (McClaurin, 2014).

This ethnography was written from a perspective of someone who grew up in higher education, and through a lens of someone whose mother belongs to the 1% of women of color of who have a doctoral degree. Within this ethnography is the examination of three students from the 2018-19 academic year, and my first year of teaching. Teaching at one of the seven elementary schools in Claremont California, a city similar to the one I grew up in, provided a sense of comfort as well as a sense of responsibility to do justice to the students in my classroom. Inspired by my background in higher education, and driven to provide an inside view of the day to day experiences of students in my classroom, as Hurston was inspired in her research, I found myself grounding my beliefs and research in culturally specific pedagogy. I completed three home visits, and have attended countless soccer games, dance recitals, musicals, etc. in an effort to provide a clearer picture into the world of a liberal and progressive community in combination with my own reflective and biased beliefs as a thirty year old Black woman who understands the importance of education and knows how big of an impact a teacher can have on a student's life.

PART A: *Who am I & why do I want to be a teacher?*

Deepak Chopra states, “I can affect change by transforming the only thing that I ever had control over in the first place, and that is myself” (Nacson, 1998). This is a perfect description of the transformation that has occurred over the last year of my life. Up until the summer before I went into my first master’s program, I wanted to be an 8th grade teacher. All through middle school and high school, and even through college I wanted to be a teacher—specifically 8th grade because I felt like I wanted to get to a student before they got to high school and had learned to hate school. Unfortunately, or rather fortunately given that I would not be where I am today without that experience, I had a mentor who told me that I was “too brilliant” to be a K-12 teacher. I decided that summer to un-enroll in the Cal Poly Pomona credential program and enroll in their masters in higher education. In the fall of 2017, I started my fourth semester as a PhD student in the Cultural Studies Program at Claremont Graduate University, and within the same semester had a true moment of reconciliation and reflection—in fact, it was a true forced moment of reconciliation and reflection. Why was I in the PhD program? Where did I see myself after the program was complete? How was my mental and physical health being affected by the stress of knowing I was in a program that I didn’t love and honestly didn’t belong in? What choices did I feel I had to make when completing homework, participating in discussions, etc. to feel good enough or that I belonged in the program at all? How did I get caught up in the politics, titles and statuses that come with the PhD, and somehow forget why I wanted to be in education in the first place? These questions were concepts that I had been questioning since my first semester of the PhD program, and I can honestly say I knew then, that the program wasn’t for me, however, in this moment/chapter of my life, I was forced to sit down and truly deal with the decisions that I had made up to this point. I was sick of sitting in classes where people with privilege continued to

pretend as though they didn't have any, I was sick of not feeling supported in my research and my passions, I was sick of feeling like no one cared about the scholars who were at the very beginnings of their academic careers and I was sick of feeling like there was more that I could be doing to help those who were just beginning their educational climb. Between questioning my passions and drive in life, feeling like I was doing a disservice to those who had not had the same educational and supportive background that I had, and suffering from a miscarriage, I had to finally acknowledged to myself and to those around me, that my true passion, the true breadth of my educational aspirations didn't belong in higher education and college level students, rather, I belonged in the beginning of a students' inspiration and aspirations, within their fundamental years of primary/elementary school. What came next is what led me here, to the teaching credential and master's program at Claremont Graduate University.

Personal Experiences and Beliefs

I have a significant background in higher education, in fact higher education is the world I grew up in. My mother is currently the Executive Director of Admissions and Enrollment Planning at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and has been in higher education in multiple forms (counseling non-profit organizations, working with families to set an educational plan to help underrepresented students get into the UC system and now the CSU system, etc.) my entire life. I grew up sitting in the back of a classroom or conference room or large auditorium listening to her provide lectures, advice and lived experiences both as a parent and an administrator for the first thirteen years of my life before I could stay at home by myself. I have seen countless former students and families come up to her and tell her how big of an influence she was on them, and I have personally learned so much about the way education, specifically that of higher education, affects families. I have seen just how important it is for the parents/guardians to be involved in

their children's academic lives, how important academic mentors are, and most importantly, how crucial school counselors and teachers are. It because of this unique viewpoint that I truly believe that a good education begins from the top and the bottom and somehow, if done right, meets in the middle. There is power within a good education. I was blessed with teachers who truly believed that education was the key to changing the world; that their students held the key to unifying the nation/world and that education was the way to bring people from different backgrounds and experiences together to create an ultimate change. It is my belief that a young students' entire perception of learning and passion comes from seeing their teachers/instructors care and provide support, and it is because of this belief that I originally thought that higher education was the route that I should go, in fact, it was the most logical decision to make. I began my career path genuinely believing that I wanted to be faculty at the university level. I wanted to inspire students, specifically those who looked like me, to believe that they too could be anything they wanted to be and that they too could represent the beauty of Blacks in higher education. So few people, including myself, had teachers of color in their K-12 experience, but I knew that once they came to college that would change. In fact, it did for me. I had a professor in college that helped me fall in love with what it meant to be black. I was an 18-year-old Communication major at the University of California, Santa Barbara and had enrolled in my first Black Studies class. When I registered for the class I didn't pay attention to the name of the professor that was teaching and was thoroughly shocked when an older, gray haired white man walked to the front of the class. I was so busy thinking, "well this is going to be 'interesting'" that I didn't pay attention to him as he walked to the computer and put on a YouTube video titled *A Huey P. Newton Story*. Women began singing, "*The revolution has come 'fight the pig it's time to pick up the gun'*" as I sat up in my chair and began to pay attention. As if he knew that this was going to grab every young person's mind in the

class, Dr. George Lipsitz—who I would later come to admire and be forever grateful to—turned off the video and said, “welcome to Black Studies 129: The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, my name is Dr. Lipsitz, and for you young black students, hopefully this class changes your life,” and it did. My Bachelor’s Degree in Gender, Ethnicity, and Multicultural Studies (GEMS) with a concentration in African American Studies in addition to a Masters of Arts in Education with a focus on multimedia studies is a direct reflection of these initial goals, and that first Black Studies course. As a Black woman, whose mind was opened in the Black Studies major at UC Santa Barbara, I was drawn to explore social justice issues, historically situate and understand the experiences of marginalized communities, and the interactions of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and other intersecting forms of marginalization from a comparative and global perspective. The interdisciplinary nature of my undergraduate department provided an academic home to understand and explore critical theory, intersectionality, pedagogies of empowerment, and research methods all with the close mentorship of core faculty. The foundational support and knowledge I received during my Master’s program has allowed me to understand the theoretical framework in which higher education is based, and taught me to create a variety of innovative and interactive learning environments. However, with learning the theoretical approach, I realized that something was still missing. There were so many students who just needed the opportunity to be exposed to higher education and a college campus—something that then realized I had been exposed to my entire life.

Working closely with faculty mentors, I sought out even more opportunities for research and for bridging the gap of theory and practice. In 2012 I was selected to participate in a research and grant writing team for PolyTransfer, a collaborative effort between Academic and Student Affairs at CPP to develop a first-year transfer experience program for incoming community college

students. My tasks were to collect and analyze data, conduct quantitative research, and assist in grant writing for the US Department of Education's Frist in the World Grant competition. I have also served as a research and grant writing assistant for a California State University (CSU) Chancellor's Grant and most recently, California's Department of Finance Innovations in Higher Education Grant. Most research that I conducted was focused on low-income, first generation, and underrepresented community college student graduation rates, persistence trends, and levels of student engagement. Once funded, I became the Program Coordinator of the newly launched program, one of the first of its kind in the CSU system. I was then able to combine my research skills with the work that it takes to run a program, putting my theory and research abilities into action. Specifically, I have helped develop an intensive transitional summer program and first-year experience program for incoming transfer students that include opportunities for undergraduate research, faculty and peer mentoring, and collaborative learning. Being able to fulfill the promise of education through conducting research and using it to transform programs and policies for students as well as experiences at Cal Poly Pomona speaks deeply to my desire to be an effective teacher-scholar and further solidified my desire to pursue a graduate degree in comparative, interdisciplinary education that combines theory and practice. However, the further into higher education I went, the more I realized that while programs like the one I was over was indeed bridging the gap of theory and practice, the number of students who looked like me, or were from other historically underrepresented groups were not there.

In noticing that the numbers were not there, I considered "catching" students at a younger age, and focused my work with programs like the Residential Intensive Summer Education (RISE) Program at Cal Poly Pomona, as well as worked at College Bound for California, a non-profit organization whose primary focus was getting underprivileged and historically underrepresented

students into college. Through these programs, I worked with high school seniors, teaching them about Black history, college preparation, worked with them on their college entrance essays, tutored their reading comprehension and writing skills and established a curriculum for high school juniors and high school seniors for college readiness, note-taking, etc. In having these amazing career opportunities however, I was never able to shake the unsettling feeling I got when I would hear and see from my students that education wasn't fun, was not a passion and was not fundamental to their well-being. By the time a student came to my office or to my lectures, it was too late for them to find a love for learning. The amount of times I have heard Black and Brown students think that sports, entertainment, and marrying rich or any variation of the two is all they need to "get ahead" in life, is unbearable. I was heartbroken to see how un-inspired and unmotivated many of my students are, and while it took some time for me to get to this place in my life, I am hoping that the opportunity to receive a multiple subject teaching credential will enable me to inspire students at the beginning of their educational journey. It has become abundantly clear that a student's attitude towards schooling, their views on higher education, their motivation and their inspiration is a direct reflection of their elementary/primary education; I am hoping to be one of the many voices of encouragement and inspiration during such a critical time in their lives.

Choice to be an Educator and the Impact of Social Justice

Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* notes that generosity, the drive to learn, and the drive to teach, must be given genuinely. He states "true generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life" to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working,

transform the world” (Freire & Ramos, 1982). In agreeance with Freire, teachers absolutely are the fundamental difference needed for young students. My husband and I had very different experiences in elementary school (and schooling in general), and while we have both ended up with Master’s degrees, our experiences defined the way in which we view education and learning in general. My husband was not encouraged nor did he have teachers who believed in him and his abilities, he did not have teachers that took the time to show him that learning could be fun, he didn’t and still doesn’t like to read, and struggles with some basics that should have been worked on at an early age. Overall, he didn’t have the educational experiences that I did in elementary school, like that of Mrs. Marcacchi, my second-grade teacher who to this day when I need to spell Mississippi I can still remember the song that she came up with specifically for me so that I could remember how to spell it, or my fourth-grade teacher, Mr. Crawford who helped me fall in love with the stars and the galaxy and looking for constellations, as well as the five other elementary school teachers whose lessons, kindness and time, each made a huge impact on me. I also had a mother, whose work in education guided her at home practice of raising me, who taught me from a young age to love to learn, to love to read and to want to learn as much as possible. I hope to learn from the experiences that my husband encountered, and step into this time of my life knowing the responsibility and great task that is at hand with educating young scholars.

Given our current national climate, elementary school teachers are more integral now than they were 20 years ago, and a lack of student access to higher education, specifically for students of color, is incredibly real. A reoccurring theme that I have noticed in my time in higher education is that access is about preparation, and preparation begins in elementary/primary school. I want to be a part of the preparation, I want to be a part of what it takes for students to reach for their highest goals. I want students to have a love and passion for learning and more importantly to ensure equity

for the educational pipeline that exists in the United States. It would be my goal to make sure that I am a part of the group of teachers working towards ending the school to prison pipeline, insuring equitable outcomes, providing access to education for undocumented students, and an issue of the utmost importance to me, the closing of the achievement gap for students of color.

Research within *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* cites “the public school as being the most flagrant institution which contributes to the destruction of African American boys. This destruction can be clearly observed during the fourth grade when many African American boys begin to exhibit signs of intellectual retrogression. Unfortunately, most never recover, and as a result, a disproportionate number of African American students find themselves ill-prepared to survive in a racist educational system,” and while this can be discouraging, research also cites that “a strong principal, an aroused and concerned community, and positive role models can do much to change this disparaging situation...suggests that more African American teachers be assigned to the primary grades because it is during the formative years that children shape their values and begin to identify with role models” (Kunjufu, 2004). This research is a prime reason why I want to focus myself on primary grades within the K-12 system, not just because of young Black boys, but for all underrepresented students who are looking for a role model within the institution of education. I also think that it is so important for young students who are not of color to be exposed to teachers of different genders and racial identities than themselves. It is because of this research and the need to focus on so many students that I have been able to construct my teaching philosophy that is directly tied to my personal experience in school, stories of friends and family’s experiences and my goal to encourage and be there for young students. My teaching philosophy is grounded in my existing beliefs about the power and potential of good education, opportunities and support provided by teachers, genuine engagement with a student’s outside-the-

classroom support systems, and the student's lived experience and experiential knowledges. I once read that "there are miracles, learning, healing, laughter, sharing and love every day in classrooms all around the world," and that "a teacher has the opportunity to impact students' lives in a positive way; this is a huge privilege that shouldn't be taken lightly," and I couldn't agree more. As a dedicated teacher, my philosophy comes from a collaborative approach guided by the belief that the passion for learning and education begins with the teacher.

With all that comes with being a future Black woman teacher, I would be doing myself a disservice if I didn't acknowledge another component towards social justice and changing lives, and that is of feminism. American prison activist, writer, singer and former Black Panther Party chairman, Elaine Brown explores the concept of feminism and the labels that many Black women have strayed away from. She writes, "Oddly, I had never thought of myself as a feminist...resenting that label, I had joined the majority of Black women in American denouncing feminism. It was an idea reserved for white women, I said, assailing the women's movement, wholesale, as either racist or inconsequential to Black people" (Brown, 1994). When I first entered higher education, I too strayed away from the label of feminist. I didn't like the idea of aligning myself with a group of people who had historically not cared about Black women and women's rights. However, over time, I have come to realize that thanks to the work of Black and other women of color, countless hours, marches, sacrifices, that every decision that I make in life, is one of feminism. While I am a representation of Black people within the classroom, I am also a representation I of feminine power, privilege and resilience within the classroom.

While I believe that my own actions are important to my students, and my overall classroom environment, I believe that it is equally important to have the support of those who are near and dear to said students. There is a quote by an unknown author that states "together we can

accomplish far more than would be possible if we operated in isolation,” and this is my philosophy regarding involving parents/guardians, community and other colleagues into the building of my classroom environment. Family/support engagement is critical to a student’s achievement, and while each students’ individual families may not look the same, it is important for each student to have a support system that exists outside of the classroom to reinforce what is being learned in the classroom. There is an Igbo and Yoruba proverb that states “it takes a village to raise a child,” that exists in many African languages. The basic meaning is that “child upbringing is a communal effort. The responsibility for raising a child is shared with the larger family. Everyone in the family participates...even the wider community gets involved”(Healey, 2004). Considering this proverb, and my true belief in it, I ask, is that each student’s individual support system provide what they can in support and guidance. In return, I will do my part as part of that individual child’s community, and supplement what I can.

Strengths and Limitations and the Impact on the School Experience

“All teachers were once students. Although they need to study current educational theory and practice to obtain their teaching credentials, research has shown that their own schooling remains a powerful influence on how they teach” (Mcglynn-Stewart, 2015). I would like to take this quote a step further, and assert that it is not just our own schooling experience in terms of how we were treated and felt in school, but the type of learner we were that will have a direct effect on how we will teach. It is because of this belief of teachers needing to remember the student always, that my top-down approach ends with the individual student (see Appendix A). It is my belief that if a student develops a passion for learning, they will never cease to grow. I believe the strength of a student comes from their life experiences and more importantly from their inner creativity and personality. It is my job as their teacher to provide an environment where their individual skills

and strengths are highlighted, and their challenging moments are met with kindness and support. I aim to provide each student with individual care and attention to complement their learning, and will provide each student with the necessary resources to encourage their individual learning styles, social attributes and emotional growth. I ultimately hope to provide an environment where each student develops a love and passion for learning that will continue to follow them throughout the rest of their academic career. It is within my classroom that students will learn about people from different backgrounds, and more importantly learn to have compassion, understanding and a willingness to learn about others. As young scholars, my classroom will be one of the first places where they can explore issues of diversity and inclusivity in a safe and exploratory environment that is ready to enable them with the vocabulary, inquisitiveness and curiosity needed to continue to unify and build our country in support of one another (see Appendix B). My classroom will be where they stop looking at themselves as students, and begin to see themselves as young scholars, ready to take on the world's challenges with their unique and creative selves (see Appendix C). Academically, I was what many would deem a "teacher's pet." I was the student who strived, all the way through college to be honest, to be liked by the teacher, and more importantly to always be right. I put a lot of pressure on myself to be "perfect" when it came to school. That need for perfection and efficiency has followed me into my professional life and has grown with me personally and professionally. In many ways, I believe that my need to always out do myself will be a tremendous asset in the teaching profession. I consider myself an incredibly organized person who also has a true love for school supplies and cleanliness. I hope that I can bring my creativity and artsy self into my classroom and come up with fun ways for students to learn and more importantly, WANT to learn. It is through my organization and love for creativity that my communication and learning style really shine. I have always loved to find efficient and creative

ways to tell stories, and still love the idea of writing handwritten letters. I think that there is a lost art to communicating on a regular basis, and look forward to having a chance to communicate with parents, students and colleagues in fun ways. My love language, something that I learned a while ago, has always been gifts (both giving and receiving), and I think that this will translate wonderfully to my life as a teacher. I look forward to class parties, celebrating holidays, finding ways for students to fall in love with art (my minor in college), and finding ways to communicate with each of my students on an individual basis.

With strengths, come weaknesses, challenges, and things to work on—there is always room for improvement. I know that I am a person that struggles to ask for help, and tends to not believe that anyone can do a task as well as I can—putting myself in a position of accomplishing a lot of tasks that I do not need to. I also know, that as a student where school came easy, I may struggle (at least at first), to connect with students where school does not come as easily for them. I think that these will be the students I remember the most, and the students that push and challenge me, forcing me to grow and expand my thought process about learning. I hope that my ability to be incredibly reflective will come as an asset and not as a limitation. As a person who tends to be both reflective and assertive, I hope that I can take channel my ability to feel peoples (specifically my students) emotions and feelings, and know when something is too hard or too emotional for them. I think that my ability to be overly organized will allow me to have a hand in each of my students lives and hopefully change them for the better. I also think that my ability to be creative and artsy will allow me to address a multitude of learning styles. I think that I will take the advice of McGlynn-Stewart (2015), and devote a large amount of professional development in the areas that I struggled the most with as a pupil. McGlynn-Stewart (2015), notes:

“Based on the findings, it seems clear that the participants’ teaching practices were influenced by their own experiences as pupils. The findings from this study suggest that

beginning teachers need to be encouraged and supported to examine the implications of their own learning history to ensure that they are teaching in their students' best interests, rather than from memories, attitudes, and perspectives that arise from their own experiences. It is significant that the participants who struggled the most as learners were more focused on understanding and meeting the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. They were also more focused on developing as teachers than the participants who were more academically successful as students."

I think that working with students on a daily basis will pull different strengths and weaknesses out of me, but I do want to acknowledge that I do believe that my ability to get close to a person, specifically that of a young student will be a great thing but could also be a potential roadblock. I think that emotionally I will want to "fix" every student, and that I will want to insert myself into students' lives when it isn't my place to do so. Not every student is going to be influenced by me, and that is okay. It is with this in mind that my hopes, dreams, fears and need to reflect on myself now and as a future teacher come into play.

Hopes, Dreams, and Fears: A Letter to My Future Teaching Self

Research shows there is a huge reflective and important impact on people writing letters to their future selves, "this is an incredible exercise to do no matter how old you are. Writing a letter to yourself gives yourself insight and teaches you valuable life lessons that will stick with you long afterwards. Think of it as a time capsule" (Hughes, 2015). Hughes (2015) notes that writing a letter to your future self does the following: 1) cultivates gratitude, 2) increases self-awareness, 3) helps you create your future, 4) helps you appreciate the passage of time and 5) gives yourself a memory. More importantly, science shows that writing about how you will look back on your life decades in the future drastically improves decision making (Stillman, 2014). It is with this insight that I would like to finish out this introductory portion of my ethnography project:

A note to my future teaching self,

Wow! I am hoping that as you read this and reflect to the hell of a time 2017 and 2018 were as years, you realize that it was such a profound, amazing and purposeful moment in your life. I hope that you have (hopefully although not necessary) 3rd graders

that are driving you nuts in the best possible way, that you love fiercely and that you have become an advocate for. I hope that you know that the hell that you went through, from the things like leaving UC Santa Barbara because of your sexual assault, to having a horrible miscarriage and leaving the PhD program were all things that led you to be one of the most amazing and passionate teachers you could ever be. I hope that you and D (your husband duh!) are still incredibly happily married, and have a few of your own children running around that wear you out just as much as your 3rd grade kiddos do! I hope that your initial fears of not being able to maintain your classroom, having students that talk back and don't like you, not being able to reach each of your students and not finding enough time in the day have passed and have been replaced with new management strategies, new ways to connect with each student and ways to combat misbehavior in a manner that helps the student deal with the core of their issues. Remember Mrs. Jensen's classroom? And the students who challenged you during your student teaching but also helped you realize how much you love the profession? I hope that you remind yourself of them every day and still have their class picture on your desk as daily reminder of all you went through to find your passion and to find the place where you were meant to be all along. I hope that you have made amazing friends, colleagues and mentors throughout your years of teaching and have learned to delegate your tasks to others! I hope you connect with your students' parents as much as you do with your actual students, and have helped them realize the amazing potential that their children have that you saw all along. I hope that your students come up to you after years of not being in your class and still remember the cool projects you did in class with them, and the small things that you taught them that you probably don't even remember. I hope you know how supported and loved you are by your group of amazing friends and your even more amazing family. I hope your mom comes to your classroom in her retirement and grades your students work (like Jen's father did while you were student teaching), and that your support system hasn't gotten sick of you showing them pictures of what you have done in your classroom! I hope that you have kept Teshia as a mentor (hey Teshia!) and are even contemplating maybe going back to a school to get that PhD, but this time in the right field!! I hope that the knowledge you have obtained as a teacher helps you help your friends kids, and that you and D have at least begun to work on your non-profit to help historically underrepresented students fall in love with school and get into college. I hope that you do pro-bono work and volunteer with different organizations to lend your expertise on K-12 curriculum to those who don't have access to the same kind of teachers that you were given or that you have become. Through all these hopes and dreams I hope you always remember that leaving the PhD and joining the Teacher Ed program was the best decision you ever made, and that now, many years later, you see that. I hope you have pushed past the need to take care of everyone else and have finally started taking care of yourself. I hope that you have fallen in love with who you are and more importantly who you were meant to be all along.

Your biggest fan,
You

PART B: *Who are my students?*

“There will be a time, not so far from now, that you will look back on this phase of your life and instead of condemning it or beating up on it...Instead of blaming or guilt, you will feel appreciation for it, because you will understand that a renewed desire for life was born out of this time-period, that will bring you to physical heights that you could not have achieved without the contrast that gave birth to this desire” - Abraham Hicks (Meah, 2017)

At what point do you begin to feel like you are doing what you were called on this planet to do? I remember reading a quote said by Oprah Winfrey who was quoting the infamous Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that stated, “Everyone has the power for greatness—not for fame but greatness, because greatness is determined by service,” (*What Oprah Knows for Sure About Finding Success*, n.d.) and I knew in my heart that message was true. It has always been my wish that God show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself—but never in a million years did I think this journey would have me falling more and more in love with educating the next generation of leaders and scholars. What an immense level of pressure that is, knowing that a large portion of what comes next in our nation and our world, rests in the hearts and minds and patience of the teachers who are educating a new generation of children (see Appendix D). The responsibility that comes with teaching has not been lost on me, and while it is easy to say that my background has prepared me for this very step in my life’s journey, nothing could have prepared me for my greatest challenge in teaching—facing my own insecurities, biases, pre-conceived notions and beliefs about being a Black, female, heterosexual teacher in a neighborhood very like the one I grew up in. My students challenge me in ways that I never imagined possible, and are a constant reminder that while, yes, I am teaching them, they have so much more to teach me.

My Students

Three and a half months into my first year of teaching at a school within Claremont Unified School District, has taught me that while the students may not have the same socio-economic issues as many other students in southern California, that by no means places their experiences and hardships in a more isolated or “privileged” manner. My students represent the larger Claremont community, a relatively diverse, educated and caring group of children who are truly looking forward to what the future holds. When I claim a level of diversity, I think that it is important to define what I mean. There are several students who come from ethnically diverse backgrounds, but this diversity also comes from the locations the students live in (from apartments and condos to mansions and everything in between), from what their parents do for a living (professors, contractors, nurses, teachers, advertising executives), their educational and language backgrounds, and the level of students who are gate vs. the students who are not even meeting grade level standards and expectations.

After having studied the surrounding community, parents, 96 overall 5th grade students and more specifically the 33 students within my class at Chaparral Elementary School, I chose students with the appropriate qualifications for my thesis, but also students that I naturally gravitated toward—both the students themselves and their parents. I initially struggled with the idea of choosing only three students, especially having seen how receptive the parents seemed to be about helping with anything that I needed for school. After speaking with my principal, we concluded that it was best to reach out to only three families (the total of case studies needed for my assignment), and wait to see if they all accepted. I was then concerned about, how do I explain this assignment to the student? How do I explain to the parent how their child was chosen? What if I got into their home and realized that they weren’t the best choice—for a multitude of possible

reasons? What if I didn't get the questions I needed answered? What if I felt uncomfortable in their home? Merriam-Webster defines a case study as "an intensive analysis of an individual unit (such as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment" (case study, n.d.), and that is just what these three focus students became, a case study on the environment in which they are currently in (both school and home) that has led to their very 10-year-old existence. The following case studies represent a self-reflection and bias-check for myself, and on a larger scale, a brief glance into the next generation of students and the environments, support systems, and hardships they may be experiencing that will forever shape who they are as people. Although the narratives portray the students' lives, interests, and successes, the journey is more mine than it is theirs. I gained invaluable knowledge not only about these children as scholars, as a part of a family unit, and individuals, but also about myself as a teacher and as result, became more invested in their success, both for the rest of this year and in the future.

Focus Student 1: Sabrina*

The first thing I remember about Sabrina, was meeting her entire family on the first day of school. A crowd of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents surrounded Sabrina as she walked into my class for the very first time, taking pictures, and each of them introducing themselves to me as a part of Sabrina's "posse." Sabrina, unlike the rest of her family, very shyly walked up to me to introduce herself, but I could tell from the look in her eyes that she was not only excited about starting a new school year, but that she had a lot to say behind the coyness that comes along with the first day of school. Little did I know just how soon that shyness would go away, and from behind it, there existed a beautiful young girl who loved to be the center of attention, had a drive to learn, and a personality that was infectious. Sabrina is a ten-year-old 5th grade student, who, I would come to learn, didn't begin speaking until she was almost five-years-old, and had a serious

language processing issue that had nothing to do with the fact that she speaks Spanish at home. The daughter of immigrants from Argentina, Sabrina takes extreme pride in her culture, and can often be seen maneuvering in a world where she thinks in Spanish but speaks in English to those around her who are not close family. At such a young age, she has already learned how to “code-switch,” the “process of shifting from one linguistic code (a language or dialect) to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting,” a process in which sociolinguists, social psychologists and identity researchers focus on the way in which “code-switching, particularly by members of minority ethnic groups, is used to shape and maintain a sense of identity and a sense of belonging to a larger community” (Morrison, 2017).

Sabrina’s eagerness to learn in collaboration with her hardworking nature are some of her greatest strengths both inside and outside of the classroom. She often wants to take notes to remember words and lessons we have covered in class, and this diligence to her studies is a true testament to how much she enjoys school. This diligence is also a direct representation of how hard Sabrina has had to work on grasping concepts that come easy to her peers, and while many of my students spend about 45 minutes a night on homework, between tutoring, working on writing and reading, and actual assigned homework, Sabrina spends closer to 2 hours nightly working on bettering her craft and working through her learning disability (conversation with parents, October 26, 2018). Seeing Sabrina in her home setting allowed me to be privy into a different side of a very bashful young girl, and see into her world of her recorded YouTube channel—where she videos her daily routines—and her immense connection to her family. Inside the classroom, Sabrina is a student who is unsure of her abilities, and works twice as hard as other students to grasp half of the information, but outside of the classroom, Sabrina is the center of attention. Her confidence, smile, and kindness draws her peers and friends to her, and her helpfulness is unmatched by any

other student of mine. She is a child who is always included in conversations with her parents, including conversations that deal directly with her, and often regurgitates the information that she hears specifically her mother say about her, including but not limited to “she doesn’t get it” being translated to “I don’t get it,” a couple of days later, and “this is not something that people who speak Spanish will ever understand” (conversation with mother, October 26, 2018). Sabrina’s beginning of the year overall scores reflect the speech and language impairments that Sabrina deals with, as well as her specific learning disability. Sabrina’s IEP at a Glance specifically states, “student’s speech and language impairments and specific learning disabilities adversely affect her ability to progress in the general education curriculum without special education support and services in the areas of Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) and Special Academic Instruction (SAI)” (Chaparral Elementary IEP, 2018).

Sabrina was chosen as a focus student because she has an incredible work ethic, which, when combined with her kind and responsible and respectful personality, drew me to her. Although low academically, she seemed proficient in English, but spoke Spanish fluently, which intrigued my curiosity as to why she was not classified as an EL student officially. I have seen her writing abilities, and noticed her reading abilities, and wanted to know more about how she got to where she is now at ten-years-old, especially given that she has been at Chaparral Elementary school since Kindergarten. Her incredible support system, and her connections to her cultural and linguistic background in conjunction with her learning disability and her personality wanted me to know more about her family background and funds of knowledge. I think this knowledge will help drive my instruction and support for Sabrina, and help her be the most successful 5th grader she can be.

Assets & Needs: Academic Standing

I have one student who is classified as an English Language Learner in my class, and Sabrina is not that student; and yet, she is the student who I think of in terms of making accommodations for EL students. Through her resource specialist program (RSP) status, Sabrina was able to classify out of being an ELL student status, and based on the request from her parents, does not need the services of ELD; she was officially reclassified fluent English proficient in 2016 (RFEP). Given that Sabrina is not a classified ELL student, I can only go based on her previous CELDT scores. These scores reflect that Sabrina was “beginning” in reading, “early intermediate” in the overall category, “early advanced” in speaking, “intermediate” in listening and “intermediate” in comprehension; these score results were from Sabrina’s third grade year (see Appendix E).

In terms of the rest of Sabrina’s academic standing, her beginning of the year tests, including, the STAR test, DIBELS and DAZE, reflect what her IEP states, that Sabrina has a severe language processing disorder that drastically affects her academic ability. Her STAR test reflects that she is within the 12th percentile of my class (out of 33 students) and that her Grade Level Equivalent reading score is that of a third grader in their second month of school, and her Instructional Reading Level is that of a third grader in their first month of school. The STAR test also tests for “Domain Scores,” which include literature, informational text and language. Out of 100, Sabrina scored 55 on these elements of the STAR test, appropriate with her overall reading level (see Appendix F). These scores on the STAR test placed Sabrina in the “urgent intervention” range of the benchmark, and at the beginning of the school year, she went to RSP 4 times a week for 30 minutes each and Speech once a week for 30 minutes. Her initial IEP goals and Objectives included the following:

Area of Need	Measurable Annual Goal #	Goal
Speech/Language	1	By 02/09/2019 Sabrina will improve speech production and discrimination with the voice and voiceless /th/ words during conversation in the speech room with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials
Oral Language	2	By 02/09/2019, Sabrina will slow down her speech and use appropriate word order during oral communication in the classroom and therapy setting in 4 out of 5 trials, with 80% accuracy
Basic Reading/Fluency	3	By 02/09/2019, Sabrina will read a grade level passage orally with 115 correct words per minute with 97% accuracy in 2 trials as measure by teacher charted records.
Reading Comprehension/Vocabulary	4	By 02/09/2019, when given a list of 10 academic vocabulary words, Sabrina will correctly define or write them in a sentence with 80% accuracy in 2 trials as measured by student work sample
Reading Comprehension	5	By 02/09/2019, Sabrina will determine the main idea of a text; recount at least 1 detail and explain how they support the main idea as measured with 75% accuracy in 2 trials by student work samples/teacher charted records

On Friday, September 28th, I conferenced with Sabrina's mother for fall parent teacher conferences and was met with a big push to remove Sabrina from the services that she receives at school. We scheduled an IEP and after this meeting, Sabrina's goals and services were changed.

Her IEP notes, the resistance from her parents, and frustration that Sabrina has experienced in this first few months of the fifth grade have not deterred her work ethic. If Sabrina does not know a word, she will either ask me for clarity or will use a dictionary to define a word. If she does not score well on a test – it is important to note that she now takes only her math tests in RSP—she will follow up with me to figure out what she could have done better. Her parents have hired a retired teacher to continue to work with Sabrina on her reading and writing ability, as well

as her reading comprehension skills, and when provided with a study guide, Sabrina does exceedingly well on tests that do not require her to write complete sentences. Many of my assessments with Sabrina are done through oral communication and teacher observation. Sabrina is able to relay information about a story with no trouble and can clearly express her ideas verbally. During summative tests, Sabrina follows the instructions once she checks for clarity of what the instructions and the questions are asking, and completes the tasks at hand—sometimes with additional time allotted. While her formal accommodations include:

- As needed tests and assignments can be taken in the RSP room
- Allow extra time on tests and assignments as needed
- Shorten tests and assignments as needed
- Tests and assignments may be read to Sabrina as needed
- Consistent format for daily activities
- Regular checks for understanding & repetition of information as needed during classroom instruction
- Verbal instructions that are separate from demonstration
- Preferential seating near the teacher & positive peer models
- One-on-one and small group instruction to review & reteach
- Modify class work to Sabrina instructional level & homework to her independent level

Many of these accommodations do not need to be done due to her due diligence.

Sabrina eagerly dives into new activities, and works well with her peers, specifically her friends within the class. Her love for school and willingness to please the teacher drives her desire to complete each assignment correctly and accurately, and she often places too much pressure on herself to get everything right. While she has an intense drive to finish everything, the pressure she places on herself to have everything done accurately often hinders Sabrina from completing assignments in a timely manner. Sabrina is also an extremely social child, with a very talkative nature. She is easily distracted by her peers, and even with her proximity to the teacher, still needs some guidance to complete her assignments. Many of her assignments get done with the help of a partner, and she communicates well with what she needs help with.

Since the beginning of the year, Sabrina has made tremendous progress. She is more able to express her thoughts and ideas in a more understandable manner, and while her writing is a far cry from meeting 5th grade standards, her work-ethic has not ceased. If the work does not require writing, her work is usually top-notch, especially her oral presentation skills. Her speech impediment does not hinder her ability to speak in front of the class, and she has done exceptionally well on the two oral presentations we have had in social studies since school began. Her overall creativity is incredible to see. If she is asked to complete an assignment where drawing/coloring is involved, her work is exceptional and exceeds my expectations of even that of her peers (see Appendix G).

Assets & Needs: Socio-Emotional Development & Social Identity

Sabrina was waiting by the door as I walked up their beautifully landscaped and manicured walkway. Of the three focus students, Sabrina's family, based on house appearance alone, were the wealthiest of the three. When pulling up to their house, I realized that I had a pre-conceived notion that this was how all of my home visits were going to be, and while Sabrina may be FS1, she was the third home visit I conducted. When I rang the doorbell, Sabrina greeted me from their camera that hung outside their front door, excitedly yelling "Hi Mrs. Goodman!" and while I was hesitant to go into this home visit because of my tepid relationship with Sabrina's parents, I was happy to see that she was so excited to see me. While Sabrina struggles in school, the support system that she has at home between her parents and her older sister (who is in the 7th grade), Sabrina does not lack in self-confidence. She is constantly boosted up by her parents, her mother specifically, and yet when I was sitting her in house, she almost seemed bashful and fully aware that her teacher was in her home. She showed me around a little, and then wanted to make sure that I saw her Halloween costume that her and her friend Cami were going to be for the non-school

related portion of Halloween, i.e. trick-o-treating. This is where Sabrina shines, in her social abilities. She is what many would deem a “social butterfly,” who surrounds herself with friends that don’t seem to notice, or at least don’t mention her academic disabilities. In the classroom, Sabrina always showers me with notes from her, complimenting me on how good of a teacher I am, and wanting me to know that I am #thebestteacher, and in receiving these notes, I realized that she was depicting to me what it was that she needed. While she has, the constant ego boost at home from her parents, she begins to feel insecure at school, and hopes to feel the same confidence boost from me, her teacher. Sabrina is a people pleaser by far, and while she is kind and respectful, she can often be snappy towards those who do not follow what she says and does. Her sense of sarcasm and humor is often misconstrued as “mean” towards other girls in the class, and in the 5th grade in general, and is often Sabrina’s defense mechanism for how she is feeling academically. If she is having a good day academically, she is kind and gentle and friendly, if she is feeling insecure or out of place, or as if she needs too much help, she can be snippy and mean—showing that her confidence is rooted in whether she believes in what she is doing. Sabrina is often the student who volunteers to participate in class discussions, seemingly without fear of making a mistake, and wants to have friends who aren’t afraid to mess up as well—which has been “tricky” for her, as she told me during my home visit.

Coming from a wealthy family, it was clear during my home visit that a large part of Sabrina’s social identity was rooted in money and status. Her mother is part of the school PFA, and this association with the schools “elite” moms’ places Sabrina at the top of the social food chain. Sabrina operates with this sense of privilege in her social group. She is the student who always needs to have everything go her way, and wants to be the one to either receive the credit, or at least be acknowledged. While Sabrina’s academics often do not reflect that of a 5th grader, if

she is asked to present information for either an academic project or for our class house teams (like that of Hogwarts where the students were broken into “houses” and earn and lose points for the teams), Sabrina shines. Her ability to make eye contact, to project her voice, and be the center of attention makes this type of element her limelight.

I hope to, by the end of the year, have instilled a sense of self-awareness within Sabrina. She has all the elements to be a productive and kind contributor to our school overall, as well as society. By allowing Sabrina to be in her element, and finding ways for her to speak orally and contribute to class discussions, I hope that she begins to form a confidence that comes from an intrinsic mindset instead of needing external validation from her family, friends, and future teachers. Sabrina applied to be a house team leader for the second trimester, as she did for the first trimester, and depending on how her letter to me explaining why she wants to be house leader goes, she will most likely be chosen for the position. I think have a position of “power” over students to teach collaboration and cooperation will be a good self-confidence boost and will hopefully transfer into her academics.

Assets & Needs: Funds of Knowledge

As previously mentioned, Sabrina is the daughter of Argentinian immigrants. She is extremely connected to her families cultural and linguistic community and funds of knowledge. She speaks Spanish at home, and travels to Argentina multiple times throughout the year (specifically for the holidays). She pulls from this both cultural and linguistic knowledge during different lessons and often reflects on life and individual lessons from a global standpoint. After conducting my home visit with the Sabrina’s family, I learned that her father is an advertising executive, and her mother was a teacher and retired to take care of Sabrina and her older sister. Education is very important to this family, as I learned, because the history of Argentina

immigrants is often one of struggle and hardship. Sabrina's father specifically stated that he hopes that his daughters will get to do whatever their purpose in life is. He mentioned that while he has found a job he loves, it was not his original career choice, he took it when he came to America more as a necessity than as a purpose in life. His goal in life is to provide for his daughters the opportunities and resources for them to do whatever their hearts desire, and watching him get tearful as he spoke on this showed the true depth of love and belief in the American Dream that he and his family have. They came to America, or "the land of opportunities," as they often referred to it as, to make a life for themselves, and while they swore to never forget the way in which they were raised and the values they had, they also wanted to provide opportunities here that were not offered in Argentina.

Sabrina's favorite TV shows and music can only be watched and heard in Argentina, and her yearly visits is something she looks forward to consistently. She often approaches as assignment with Argentina in mind, and brings a global perspective to our class discussions. She often translates things into Spanish and has written about, in her writing journal, how her biggest fear is to stop dreaming in Spanish. She feels as though if she stops dreaming in Spanish, that it will mean she is no longer connected to her roots and her family. As we talked during her home visit, she spoke about how Halloween was not a holiday that was celebrated in Argentina, and her mother mentioned that she loves to go all out for every holiday because $\frac{3}{4}$ of the holidays we celebrate here in America were not celebrated back home. Her mother mentioned that it brought her such joy to see her children grow up in a society that allows women to flourish, and that she really does believe the "future is female" as she wore a sweatshirt with the same motto.

Assets & Needs: Experiences, interests, & Developmental Considerations

Sabrina loves to play tennis, and hopes to be the next Serena Williams when she grows up. She is driven by wanting the world to be a nice place, and if she could do anything in the world (regardless of money), she would solve world hunger and make school an option. As noted above, Sabrina is a RSP and Speech student who has had an IEP since kindergarten. As identified by her parents during my home visit, she did not begin speaking until she was 41/2 years old. Because she began speaking at such a late age, her reading and writing are also significantly behind grade level standards, but she has the strength and will to put her mind to any task she is given. Her drive really comes from her parents instilling a sense of accountability and responsibility for her own actions. Sabrinatina has been getting supplemental help at home to specifically work on her reading and writing skills and strategies, which have led to her feeling that school is hard and exhausting and “takes up too much of the day”

Action Plan

In terms of next steps for Sabrina, I think that using the strategies and notes I made within the comments of her first trimester report card is a good place to start. Within the comments, I stated the following:

Sabrina is a pleasure to have in class, and has made significant progress in terms of her testing--I can tell how much she is pushing herself, and how much she is studying, and I hope to see this continue. She is able to listen to and understand directions given to the class, and does not need to come up to me as often to ask questions. While she has made tremendous strides in studying and some class work, Sabrina needs to improve her written language. It is sometimes difficult to tell what she is trying to say. Please encourage her oral storytelling at home, this will help her writing skills. While her writing is an area of growth, Sabrina has beyond excelled in math, and while she is still working on her speech skills, she continues to impress me with her ability to work on herself within the classroom by reading aloud in front of her peers. Sabrina is an overall energetic and enthusiastic learner. She is

willing to take risks and loves a challenge, and her eagerness to learn is truly contagious. Grades/scores reflect accommodations and modifications made to the grading criteria of the curriculum.

While these comments are a great place to start, there are some very specific actions that I can take to ensure that Sabrina is meeting her fullest capabilities in my class. These steps include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Continuing to let Sabrina take all tests at RSP. While she, along with her parents, have been trying to move away from having Sabrina take tests with our specialist, it will always be an option for her to. She continues to take math tests in RSP so that she can have word problems explained to her, and due to her accommodations, even if she takes the test within my class, I will explain to her what different questions mean for clarification and understanding on her part
2. I will allow Sabrina to set the pace for her learning. For example, Sabrina spent some vacation time recently in Argentina with family, and when she returned, we were getting ready to take a spelling test. She took the words home, and the following day took the spelling test. I asked if she wanted the score to count, and she said no, but that she wanted to get back into the swing of school. She will be taking the test next week, but is really beginning to drive her own education—which is admirable to see
3. I will continue to, and will be more conscious about, making sure that I am not going too fast with my instruction (especially when reading something aloud, or saying something verbally)
4. I will make sure that she is provided with a study guide for all tests (all students are, however, because of my focus students, this became more of a priority) (see Appendix H)
5. All instructions for major projects will be written down and articulated verbally
6. I will continue to set aside time to work with Sabrina on her reading and writing comprehension strategies
7. Sabrina will be given the opportunity to verbally express answers to me for tests and writing assignments both big and small

While these may not seem like large strategies, I think that these small but conscious decisions and strategies will contribute highly to Sabrina's overall success as a fifth-grade student. These will also be things that I would recommend to her next teacher when I begin to think about placement. I also think it is important to take into consideration when teaching Sabrina, not just her language processing disorder, or that she is a second language learner, but that she is also a student who is the child of immigrants, both of whom value education immensely, and do not have a college degree from the United States. This is important to note because Sabrina and her sister will

classified as first generation college students, meaning they are the first in their family to go to college in the United States should they choose to go. Research shows that “how school systems respond to migration has an enormous impact on the economic and social well-being of all members of the communities they serve, whether they have an immigrant background or not” (Schleicher, 2015). I have seen first hand how much pressure her parents have put on her, and I want to make sure that I provide her with the support she needs to not feel as though she can’t struggle or have a hard time.

Focus Student 2: Felix*

Felix walked into my classroom the first time hoping to be ignored, hoping that he would go unnoticed. If it were not for his mom, I would not have met Felix on the first day of school prior to school beginning. Claire walked right up to me, pushed Felix forward, and said “Hi, I’m Claire, and this is my son Felix, he is so excited to be in your class this year!” Felix, unlike his mother, briefly looked up at me, and then tossed his head, with his then longer shaggy hair, down toward the floor. Having read the prior year teacher’s comments about Felix, I knew that he was shy child, but what I was not prepared for was for the intriguing, curious, knowledgeable ten-year-old that Felix unfolded himself to be. The son of a former hospital foundation chair (mother) and current sports management and brand team executive for the Los Angeles Kings (father), Felix articulates himself in a manner much more mature than that of a fifth-grade boy. Felix is the youngest of three boys, and, according to his mom, sees his brothers as his best friends. Charlie is a sophomore in high school and Harry is an 8th grade student at the local middle school. Both boys were part of my home visit, and described their brother as silly, kind, inquisitive and quiet. Although I have not had the privilege of meeting Felix’s father, there is no doubt that Felix and his dad are close. Felix loves to play hockey, and this is something that he and his father bond over, share, and do together.

Felix and his family moved to California from New Jersey during the summer between his second and third grade school year, and while he does not officially live in the Chaparral school zone, Claremont Unified School District allows for parents to choose elementary schools for their children to attend based on need, academic ability, teachers, etc. Felix's mother spent a lot of time deciding between our school and another school in the district with a similar academic profile, and chose Chaparral because of the homey, welcoming vibe and teachers that she believed would push all three of her children. Felix's first grade teacher (in New Jersey), was the first teacher to mention that she believed that he had an auditory processing disorder, and began to work with Felix on the different strategies that would work for his learning style. By the time the first grade was over, Felix was exceling, and the same strategies went into play for his second-grade year. When the family moved from the East Coast, Felix's mom made his third-grade teacher aware of what she had been told of Felix's disorder, but did not put any official (504) accommodations into play, trying to see if this teacher noticed what his previous teachers did. After speaking with his third-grade teacher, she noted to me specifically that she honestly did not have any issues with Felix, and felt as though maybe he had learned how to manage his disorder with the strategies that previous teachers had shown him. It wasn't until he was met with his fourth-grade teacher, who found Felix's need for perfection, "inability to listen," and what seemed like overall "defiance," that Claire decided to have him tested here in California and had an official 504 plan made to make sure that the strategies that she had been given previously would continue to be implemented into his class daily.

Felix was chosen as a focus student because of his inquisitive nature, his hunger for learning, and his ability to be an incredibly gifted student who deals with a learning disability and still pushes through and excels in everything he does. His shy nature is not a reflection of who is

truly is, and his mom, who has become my room parent, made me feel so incredibly welcomed to the school and made me feel like I was already making a difference in Felix's life. Felix exceeds expectations in almost all subjects, and has a hunger for learning that is honestly insatiable. His home life, support system and ability to process information in patterns and logic intrigues me and I think that having a student who is gifted, but has some learning disabilities, will be a welcome challenge for me as a new teacher.

Assets & Needs: Academic Standing

Felix is a bright and gifted student, who often raises his hand (almost jumping out of his chair) to answer a question or add to the classroom discussion. The first week of school, he was very attentive, and could even be defined as a perfectionist. I received an email from Claire, his mom, the Tuesday after school began (5 days into the school year), requesting to meet with me and informing me that Felix was on a 504 plan. Her email to myself and the principal of the school stated:

Good morning Ladies!

At the end of last school year, I met with [REDACTED] (Felix's 4th grade teacher) and [REDACTED], a 504 Coordinator for the CUSD school district and we put together a 504 plan for my son Felix [REDACTED]. I don't know the proper way in which I should proceed as Felix's parent, but I felt that meeting with you both would be a good start. He had a difficult time this past school year and I want to make sure that we are all on the same page to help him succeed this school year. Please let me know if you both might have some availability in your schedules to meet with me.

I look forward to hearing from you and to getting to know you both this year!

Kind regards,
Claire [REDACTED]

At this point, given that I am a new teacher, I decided to do a little digging for information about Felix. While I had been given his 504 plan, I was not sure what all the information was that I was

being told, and can honestly say I did not pay as much attention to it in the summer. After going back and looking at his 504, I realized that while Felix is brilliant and honestly gifted, he has an auditory processing disorder that makes it difficult for him to keep up with the pace of an everyday fifth-grade class at times. The accommodations and actions to be specifically taken for Felix include the following:

- Repeat and clarify instruction as needed
- Repeat key information during lessons
- Get Felix's attention before giving directions
- Have Felix restate directions to check for comprehension
- Provide visual augmentation when possible and appropriate
- Preferential seating near teacher and board
- Provide modeling/demonstration as possible and appropriate

After reading through this 504, I realized that Felix was already placed in the front of the classroom, and a lot of the techniques I learned during student teaching came in handy for his required accommodations. The parent survey that went out the first week of school detailed that Felix's strengths were his thirst for knowledge, reading, math, science, and learning about nature, history and the world around him; and that his weakness is very hard on himself and very much a perfectionist, whose auditory processing disorder makes this even more intense and elevated.

Felix's 504 accommodations are just that, accommodations, they are not needed because of a hindrance to his academic ability, it is a way to be mindful of what he needs to be his best and most successful self. It is important for me to note this, because if one were to look at his test scores, and reading and writing abilities, it would probably not raise red flags that he has special needs. At the beginning of the school year, Felix's STAR test results showed that his grade level equivalent reading level was 7th grade 3rd month (see Appendix I), and his instructional reading level was that of a 6th grade 7th month student. He has aced almost every test that has been given to him this trimester, and is part of the "math talkers," group in class for my enriched students. On

the CAASPP tests given, Felix has been above standard since beginning at Chaparral Elementary in the third grade. Felix is one of my students who would benefit from relieving a little pressure from what he puts on himself. Within his first trimester report card, I noted the following:

Felix is a pleasure to have in class. He always has something interesting to share, has a unique perspective, and comes up with creative ideas. He gets along with everyone and is kind and thoughtful. He is truly an exceptional student academically, and a true team player inside and outside of the classroom. He is always willing to work cooperatively with others on projects and willingly takes on responsibilities in the class. Felix's exceptional school work reflects his enthusiasm for learning and his inner drive to excel. Felix takes pride in his work and always does an exemplary job with homework, class work, and studying for tests. He would benefit from worrying slightly less and relaxing a bit more. His positive attitude is contagious, and his competitive nature keeps other students attitudes high and wanting to be successful as well. He is working on his confidence and it shows. He reads in front of his peers with great poise and fearlessly takes on challenges in the classroom. He sets a wonderful example for other students to follow. I am incredibly proud of how he has pushed himself in reading and writing (taking on challenging books, and pushing himself in his personal connections and opinions based on text-evidence), and appreciate his persistence and dedication to math and science.

I stand by every word that went home on his report card, and I look forward to seeing Felix grow into a student that isn't afraid to make mistakes. Felix is a student that takes long periods of time to complete assignments, because he is so concerned with the quality of the work that he is doing, that he often loses track of time. Felix also struggles with listening to instruction and directions given if they impede with what he is currently working on, and can become obsessed with making sure that everything is done correctly, and on time. This need to be working on something for extensive amounts of time, reflects into the peers he works with in class, and his overall social/emotional behavior.

Assets & Needs: Socio-Emotional Development & Social Identity

Felix has an extreme thirst for knowledge. He enjoys all subjects and finds friends that are similar to his academic level—he seems to enjoy having friends that can push him, and challenge him. He puts a lot of pressure on himself to succeed, and only surrounds himself with people who are going to consistently challenge him and be his competition inside and outside of the classroom. He often works with the same two boys within class, although he has been trying to expand his friend group. When asked on his 2019 goals what he wanted to achieve socially, it was to increase his friend group. In fact, on the parent survey that went home at the beginning of the school year, one of the goals they had for this year was for Felix to make new friends. Felix has really expanded and grown in the 4 brief months that I have known him, and he continues to push himself in making new friends and finding people who have the same interests he does. The math enrichment group, i.e. the “math talkers,” have become a group of friends to him that share the same values and drive that he has, but have also challenged his beliefs and his way of completing tasks. Outside of the classroom, he considers his brothers his best friends, and struggles with “playdates” or attending birthday parties of friends.

Felix also ice skates and plays hockey and soccer. These two sports give him the opportunity to not just be the “nerd,” and I am sure really push him out of his comfort zone. I am curious how his perfectionist self affects his ability to play with a team or to play sports in general. Often in class, if the students are given time to work around the classroom with friends, I can usually hear Felix goading his friends to be as “good as he is” and to “step their game up.” I have had to consistently remind Felix that not only is it unkind to speak to friends that way, but that it is ok to have friends whose brains don’t work in the same way that his does. I have spoken with Felix’s mother a multitude of times about trying to get him to relax and be a kid, and to be okay

with making mistakes. I will continue to make Felix aware when he is putting too much pressure on himself, and will continue to make sure that if I notice that he is taking an assignment too seriously, to force him to take a break or turn the assignment in as is. As the academic year continues to progress, I notice that Felix has been putting an exuberant amount of pressure on himself, and gets to the point of where he honestly cannot function if a question is not answered, or if he doesn't feel as though he understands the assignment.

When asked what he wants to do and wants to be when he gets older, Felix proceeded to tell me that he wants to do something in technology and wants to be rich. When asked to take that a little deeper, he admitted that he has not found anything that he wants to do yet, but he does know that he wants it to be in technology, and that he wants a career that will garner him enough money to live in a large mansion that is modern and is nothing like the house he grew up in. What was interesting about this statement, was that of all the houses I visited for this project, Felix's family's house felt the most welcoming, the warmest and the most "non-Claremont," of the three. You could tell they lived very comfortably, but were more about living together and having fun than about showing how much money they had. After noting my own feelings about his house, I asked why modern? And I will never forget Felix's response, so that my parents can see both ways of living and not have choose. I remember asking him, what he meant by that statement and his exact words were "my parents have given me so much, I want to make them proud and show them that there are other ways to live that can still feel like home and family." This statement is a genuine reflection of who Felix is a human being, even at such a young age, and I look forward to seeing him grow more and more mature as the rest of the academic year progresses.

Assets & Needs: Funds of Knowledge

Felix is one of my world travelers. His father has a job that allows his family to travel on a regular basis, and pulls a lot of his knowledge from having traveled to multiple countries at such a young age. He has traveled all through Europe, and, as I learned in my home visit to his house, would rather live in Germany than anywhere else in the world. Both parents are college graduates, and his father has a Master's in Business Association (MBA), that has helped him progress along in his career. School is very important to the entire family, and honestly begins with Felix's parents. They have a desktop computer that the three children use for school projects and assignments, and don't allow their children to play video games. There is only one television in their house, that is to be watched in the living (the hub of their house), and they make sure that their children can come to them and be open and honest about everything. While this can seem strict to many, it was a breath of fresh air compared to a lot of my other students and their cellular phones (in Felix's family only his oldest brother has a cell phone, and that is because he is in high school and he cannot have it in his room when he goes to sleep it must charge in the kitchen). I would have to say, after spending time with 4 of the 5 family members (Felix's father was at work), it was easy to see that the major thing that has influenced their family the most is operating as a family. They are required to play outside at least 2 hours a day (even with homework), all homework must be done when they get home from school, they eat dinner together as a family every night (even nights when Felix's father stays in Los Angeles, the rest of the family either drives or takes the train to meet him in LA), and every weekend is filled with at least one family activity.

When I asked Felix how he felt about school, he expressed that he really loves school. He enjoys learning and sometimes feels like he can't hold his excitement in (see Appendix J). His

favorite subjects are math and science, but he really enjoys reading as well. While writing and social studies are not his favorite, he has found different things about them that he enjoys, and loves learning how each subject intertwines with each other. His brothers' math and science homework make him excited to get into middle school and high school. Felix's family celebrates every holiday over the top—for example, I conducted my home visit very close to Halloween and was greeted by a house that was covered in fake spider webs and scarecrows outside, and beautiful Halloween décor on the inside. Claire informed me that she often hosts her husband's work holiday parties (Halloween and Christmas specifically) at their house, and that they make sure that the boys are part of the parties. She and her husband both believe that exposing their children to working professionals, learning to have adult conversations, seeing how people mingle and network, is an important part of being prepared for the real world. Not only do I feel like Felix will make a difference in this world, but I feel like his innate ability to relate to adults is something that has been fostered from a very young age. While he is a shy boy, he is not timid or bashful, he will look you in the eye and ask for what he needs, and this is a direct reflection of the environment he has been a part of from a very young age. His mom let me know that I am the best teacher that Felix has had since they came to California, that I treat him with respect and don't squander his love of learning, I in fact, help him dig deeper into this learning. I have helped Felix find books that he loves, in fact, he has been making his way through the Harry Potter series since school began, and it is something that he and I have bonded over immensely.

Assets & Needs: Experiences, interests, & Developmental Considerations

Felix is incredibly hard on himself and has struggled in particular this year since his older brother has moved into middle school and is no longer at the same school as him. He is driven by personal success and praise, and specifically does not like to be the center of attention or singled

out in front of the entire class. He has struggled making friends, and is having an internal battle with being in sports and being into school. It is important to note that Felix had a particularly difficult fourth-grade year, and came into the fifth-grade feeling insecure about his academic and social abilities. Felix having a 504-plan created for him was probably one of the best things his mother could have done, and has really allowed for him to ask the questions he needs to, and for me to be mindful of the things that he needs to be successful.

As stated before, Felix wants to grow up and do something in technology. What was more important in this conversation, was his want and need to make his parents feel proud and to be honest, to outdo his brothers. He considers the most influential person in his life his dad, because he sees his dad as a dad, as a husband and as someone who loves their job. He wants to grow up and have a family, like that of his parents, hoping to have 3-4 kids of his own and a wife that will stay home and watch their children like his mother does. Considering all his positive influence and support at home, it is interesting to see Felix struggle so much and be such a perfectionist. He does not come from a household that fosters that type of child, and it makes me curious where his obsession to be perfect comes from. I also wonder how it is addressed at home. I have had multiple conversations with Felix's mom, including one coming up this week, about making sure that Felix relaxes a bit, and how I can better help him overcome his intense fear of failure. When it is math time, and he can show the patterns that he thinks in and the way his brain works, Felix is most comfortable in the classroom. When it is any classwork assignment that requires him to only listen to me verbally and respond, Felix is the most uncomfortable, to the point where I have created a daily PowerPoint (see Appendix K) that allows him to follow along with where we are and what it is that we are supposed to be working on. When we do our novel study, Felix can read along with me, because each student in the class has their own copy of the novel, making it to where the

auditory component is just that, only a component. Any work that is primarily oral is where Felix struggles the most, and is something that I am incredibly mindful of, and have somewhat eliminated except for spelling tests where the words must be given to him orally. Knowing how Felix's academic year was last year, I try to be mindful and not get exasperated by his intense need to have questions answered immediately, and have worked on creating a system where he and I can communicate without him saying my name 1,000 times a day.

Action Plan

Like to that of Sabrina, I think that Felix's action plan of next steps, begin with the comments I sent home to parents on his first trimester report card. As noted previously, I believe that Felix could benefit from not putting as much pressure on himself. My next steps for him include the following:

1. Continuing to have visual aids to coincide with what I am orally presenting for Felix to be able to take notes
2. Continue to have typed up assignment requirements and rubrics at the beginning of major assignments (see Appendix L)
3. Continue to work with Felix's mom on ways that I can adjust to make sure that Felix is the most successful student possible
4. Making sure that Felix is branching out and working with students that he would not normally work with
5. Making sure that Felix understands each assignments requirement and what he should be currently working on
6. Speaking with Felix on a regular (if not daily) basis to check in with him and see what he is not understanding
7. Providing Felix extra time on tests and assignments if needed
8. Providing Felix, a separate desk to work at for tests and quizzes
9. Allowing Felix to set the pace for his classwork, while still making sure he is on task
10. Eliminating some of Felix's nightly homework knowing that it takes him longer to complete assignments

These strategies will allow for Felix to get the necessary support he needs, while still challenging him. A component of Felix that makes his action plan and having him in class at times, is that he is such a bright student that it is easy to forget that he needs special accommodations. This list of

action plan items should keep me accountable to the things that will set Felix up for success. I will also make sure to make sure that Felix understands that “Excellent is Good Enough,” and “Listen, Ask Questions, and Help Frame Predictions,” as stated within *Teaching Strategies to Help Perfectionist Students* by Tricia Richardson. These two strategies include the following:

1. Adapting the Motto “Excellent is Good Enough”: by providing a rating scale, along with the expected amount of time the task requires (i.e. with a timer on the PowerPoint screen), I will ask Felix to rate his work and begin to assess his assignments himself and see if he is on target for how he is doing. Research shows this will alleviate a lot of anxiety because he will now have very clear parameters and expectations (Richardson, 2017).
2. As Felix continues to do well in school, should he receive a grade that he does not like, instead of asking him “what’s wrong,” I can say “I see that you are upset with this (insert grade here). What would a 100 would have told you that the (insert grade) doesn’t?”. This puts the ownership back on Felix and will hopefully force him to re-evaluate his mindset and thinking. By me asking, not telling, “I am showing students that I genuinely care and value their feelings, but are also helping them analyze, regulate, and manage their emotions in a more appropriate way” (Richardson, 2017).

Focus Student 3: Blake*

Blake was the first student I met on my first day of teaching the fifth grade at Chaparral Elementary school. This young, put together, well-polished scholar walked up to me with all the confidence in his small frame with his father and said, “good morning Mrs. Goodman I am Blake and this is going to be an amazing school year,” and he handed me a lavender plant. While I appreciated Blake’s confidence, and downright swagger, I was also incredibly aware that he had no back-pack and did not seem prepared for his first day of school. It was then that his dad

introduced himself to me, and stated that Blake wanted to meet me and introduce himself, but that he was not going to be attending school for the first two days. Blake had recently had a growth removed from his body, and needed a couple of days to recover from the outpatient surgery. It was at that time that I was blown away, WOW this student, who wasn't feeling well, got up, got dressed, and came to introduce himself on the first day of school knowing that he wasn't going to be in class. He later told me that not only did he want to meet me, but that he wanted to be a role model for his younger brothers. Blake is the oldest of three boys, Caiden is a 7-year-old first grader and Caign is a 4-year-old who is in Pre-K. As my first introduction to Blake, I can say that he is still a student that aims to be a role model for others. The parent survey that went out to Blake's parents was a very insightful view into such a rambunctious, confident easily distracted scholar. The 5 words that his parents used to describe Blake were: brave, honest, impulsive, loyal and smart. They identified his strengths as: "Blake is smart and capable, he enjoys helping his friends and likes 'explaining' how to do certain things," and they noted that his weaknesses included, "Blake can be easily distracted and hard to get him back on track" (home parent survey 2018).

Blake is gifted student, who finds a way to connect to specific subjects, mostly science, and looks for ways to make connections for him to fall in love with a specific discipline (see Appendix M). His love for science comes from a want to make the world a better place, and a specific want to heal and help his mother. Blake's mom was diagnosed with stage III melanoma in the fall of 2017, the beginning of his 4th grade year of school. By the end of last year, his mother's cancer was in remission, and all seemed well. However, at the beginning of this academic year, Jocelyn was diagnosed with "second cancer," that is often a consequence of skin cancer (the type of cancer she had last year). Blake has internalized this disease, and is hoping to find a cure to make sure that no other student will have to deal with and feel the emotions he does every time his

mother has a doctor's appointment. He is incredibly distracted when he knows a doctor's appointment is coming up or has just passed, and consistently lets me know the ways in which he wants to enact change. Blake is a student who, as previously mentioned, is easily distracted. Instead of letting this be his downfall, Blake initiates different things that he needs to feel emotionally supported within the classroom. Blake specifically will ask if he needs to have lunch with me on a specific day, or takes initiative on his academics by asking to be moved to an "island" desk so he is not distracted, and will let me know if he cannot handle the stressors of being in the enriched math group that day.

Blake was chosen as a focus student because of his deep personal and emotional connection to the world and his peers. At such a young age, Blake has the ability to feel what others may be thinking and feeling internally, and is incredibly perceptive of the world going on around him. Blake wants to heal the world, and his confident and gifted abilities gives me hope for the next generation of scholars. When asked who motivates him, he told me that his mom motivates him every day because she reminds him to be kind, respectful and brave. As my focus student, I hope that I can teach Blake to give himself a little grace, and in return, he can continue to inspire me to be brave in the stances that I make in my classroom.

Assets & Needs: Academic Standing

Blake is one of the top students in my class academically. His previous report cards, as well as his first trimester report card from me, contain more 4s than anything (on a 4,3,2,1 scale), and the things he is able to ascertain naturally, many of my other students will never be able to grasp. At his laziest (assuming he turns in his work) his grades usually fall between a 3- and 3, and when he studies and put effort in to his work, 4s are always close to follow. He belongs to my "math talkers" or math enrichment group, and has excelled in every subject, with a specific focus

and love for science. Blake's test scores reflect a student that is often thoughtful and consideration of his responses (short answer), and he was above and exceeding expectations in every subject on his 4th grade, 3rd grade and 2nd grade CAASSP scores.

When he can complete his classwork, and doesn't have a day where he is heavily distracted, he is an exceptional student. Where Blake struggles, a lot because of him being so distracted with what is going on at home, is getting his classwork done in a timely manner. When his mom was undergoing a lot of treatments and tests earlier this academic year, I would allow Blake to take his work home and work on it at his own pace without the distractions of his peers and his own thoughts. Where the problem occurred, that both his mother and I noticed, was that in him being able to take his work home, he seemed to think that he could get everything done at home and would therefore be able to goof off at home. His mother and I have had extensive conversations via telephone, text and in person, where we have tried to ascertain the best form of discipline for his newfound lazy behavior. For example, prior to winter break, the entire class was working on a "Holiday's Around the World" packet, where every morning for their bell ringer assignment, they were to read with a partner, or group, about the ways children in different countries celebrated the holidays. Jocelyn (his mother) sent me a message late into December noting that she had seen this packet in Blake's homework folder that had not been touched at all (literally had never been written in), and she was inquiring if this was a new homework assignment I had given to him. After I clarified that this was something we were doing in class in the mornings and that 5/6 of the packet should have already been completed, it was then that I realized that because Blake is such a brilliant student, that he had fallen through the cracks of me checking to make sure that he was done with assignments. After this discussion, Jocelyn and I decided that Blake would receive an incomplete on the packet. The next day in class, because he knew that he was going to receive an incomplete,

he did not finish the final two entries with the rest of the class, and when I notified his mom, we decided that he would still receive an incomplete, but that he would finish the assignment over winter break to show that laziness and a sense of being nonchalant was never acceptable. This is the support that I have received from his mom, and as we progress to having a weekly check in, I want to make sure that Blake continues to be challenged and pushed (see Appendix N).

Blake is the student who wants to take initiative, and does well with projects that allow him to express his creativity. Assignments where the guidelines are outlined, but not set in stone seem to work best for his learning style. When I began to speak to students about doing a colonies project, Blake suggested creating an individual “Goodman town” in class, made up of multiple “student made” colonies for students to be able to act out and truly live through the creation, establishment and actual living through a colony life. He often finds ways to incorporate drawing and color into his assignments, and left to his own devices, would prefer to find ways to perform or orally express information that he knows rather than write anything down. This however, does not mean that he is not a strong writer, Blake’s writing is impeccable, well-thought out and detailed (see Appendix O). He often submits thinking maps or his initial organization process to his writing, and writes with character and finesse, especially for an 11-year-old. This ability to express himself, especially in a oral communicative manner, should be noted, because he is also the student that enjoys having all the attention on himself, and will find ways to bring attention to what he is saying. He loves to go up to the board to do work, and often wants everyone in class to know how smart he is. He works best on his own, because he is often distracted by friends, and when asked to work in pairs, often turns the conversation into something that is not subject/assignment specific because he already knows the answer and how he plans to present the information. This is great for him as an individual, but makes it particularly difficult to partner him up with anyone.

Assets & Needs: Socio-Economic Development & Social Identity

Blake is our class comedian along with a couple of other boys. He is often the one to respond with a witty response, and often surrounds himself with students who are smart, but who are also comical and don't take everything so seriously, including school. Being surrounded by these students can cause Blake to become distracted easily. Blake is part of the math enrichment group in our class, but has struggled maintaining his "membership" in this enrichment group because the friends that he hangs out with in class and at recess are different from my advanced and above average students in class. Blake's strength socially is his ability to maneuver through multiple friend groups. He can move from the "jocks" (because he plays soccer) to the nerds and video game players, to the artists and students who are often seen as "loners." He doesn't seem to have a set group of friends, and has recently been gravitating toward another student whose mother also has cancer—his mother's cancer is terminal and she was not expected to make it through the Christmas holiday. This relationship has been sweet to watch, especially knowing that both Blake and this other boy's moms are friends. An area of growth that I would like to see Blake work on would be not being as physical in his play. While research notes that many boys "are aggressive because they are frustrated or because they want to win. Sometimes they are just angry and can't find another way to express that feeling," Blake has exhibited this aggression far beyond the time of him finding out that his mother was sick (n.d). He and another young male student in my class often get into trouble and are disciplined for playing too roughly. Another area of need that I would like to see Blake work on is his need to chew on everything. After doing some research on what could be going on with Blake, I came across an article that spoke about help for children with ADHD who have an oral fixation. While Blake has not officially been diagnosed with ADHD, I have spoken with his mother about his oral fixation issues, and his lack of being able to focus

issues, and spoke with her specifically about ways that I could provide opportunities for Blake to become more aware of strategies for him to work on. Research shows that one option for dealing with oral-stim seekers in school environments is to “allow the child to chew gum or suck on hard candy. Choosing flavors that will provide stimulation—very sour or hot favors, for example” (Marner, 2018). One positive about this approach is that it is fairly unobtrusive and “normal.” It won’t make Blake stand out as different.

Blake is fully aware that he chews on things, and that he needs to work on his physicality with other students, but he is also incredibly aware of his kind spirit that often needs a little more sensitivity than a lot of my other students. He understands that he picks up on others’ emotions, and this is something that I am incredibly aware of when I am having a frustrating day. For myself, learning to turn a negative into a positive – i.e. “thank you for walking Blake,” instead of “walk Blake!” are ways that I can continue to reinforce a positive learning environment for Blake. Blake is coming into his own with how he needs to study and how he needs the classroom to be for him to be successful, and if we continue to work together as a team, I see him being incredibly successful—especially considering the funds of knowledge that he already possesses from his amazing and supportive home life.

Assets & Needs: Funds of Knowledge

Blake pulls from his parents’ funds of knowledge, both parents are lawyers (mother is no longer a practicing lawyer), and he often questions the legality, rationality and logic of a lot of lessons due to this knowledge that he hears in his household on a consistent (if not daily) basis. His mother is the daughter of a college professor from the nearby Claremont Colleges, and his father was a first-generation college student who, after speaking with him, clearly still feels a sense of imposter syndrome, in which he does not feel as though he belongs, although he has his own

law firm. Blake's favorite person on this entire planet beats out his mom (just barely) and is his grandfather on his mother's side. When I asked him why his "papa" was his favorite person, he said "because he talks to me like I am an adult and am responsible for my own actions" (at home interview). Blake needs to consistently be spoken to as though he is older than he is, a large part of this is because he is the oldest of three children. I asked both of his brothers how they would describe their sibling and they both used the same words (Caden helped Caign): kind, funny, responsible, hard-working, and cry baby. When I asked his mom how she would describe Blake, she said "kind, someone who feels the emotions of others, a natural leader and smart." While I have not had a chance to spend as much time with Blake as his family, these traits describe traits that I see in the classroom. These traits are also the key to how the family operates and feels about education. Both of Blake's parents grew up in a household where school was a given, but was not regarded in a high manner. When speaking with Jocelyn (Blake's mother), she mentioned that school is not just a given for her children, but an expectation. She said all three of her boys will be going to college, not because they do or do not want to, but because there is no other way.

The role of the teacher for this family was a huge component of my home visit. Like that of Felix, Blake did not have a good fourth grade year. Academically he excelled, but his relationship with his teacher was not a positive one (Felix and Blake had different 4th grade teachers). Both Blake and his mom mentioned how my teaching style really worked well with Blake, and that he wanted to rise to my expectations. Jocelyn then noted that she hasn't seen Blake this in love with school in a long time, and how this made her realize just how crucial a teacher was to how her child felt about school. She wanted me specifically to think about this when placing Blake in his class next year (teacher temperament and Blake's learning style). I was surprised, after speaking with Blake's former teacher, at how much Blake either seems to have matured, or

how drastically he is affected by teacher. I note this, because his previous teacher found Blake immature, unkind and selfish—none of which I would use to identify Blake in my class. It was also interesting to see Blake’s family’s house. They have recently downsized from a large 5-bedroom house in the hills of Claremont, to a 3-bedroom attached condo. This downsize was done, in large part, to Jocelyn’s sickness. While they are not struggling for money in any means (Blake’s parents’ choice of words), when Jocelyn got sick, they sold their house to have the liquid cash in case their insurance did not cover any experimental treatments, or in case her disease became so severe that they wanted to create lasting memories and travel the world before she succumbed to her illness. So far, neither have had to happen, but both parents have noted that the move has brought them closer together. They were incredibly kind and Blake took me on a tour of the entire house (including his parents’ bedroom) for me to see how he lived. Seeing how Blake and his family lived gave some insight into how Blake operates in the classroom.

Assets & Needs: Experiences, interests, & Developmental Considerations

Depending on the type of day that Blake is having—usually dependent on whether his mother has a doctor’s appointment coming up, he will have lunch with me in the classroom to talk about his feelings. Over the past couple of months, Blake seems to have checked out of school, and has become so distracted that no classwork is getting done. After speaking with his mother, we have set up a weekly check-in, where Blake’s weekend activities and extracurricular activities will be based on his performance in school that week. While he has been having a rough few months, it is important for me to note what drives Blake. He is a student that does well with constant reinforcement and applause from not just his teacher, but friends and family. He is beloved by his two younger brothers, and lives to “impress” them. He wants so badly to fix his mother’s disease, that he consistently speaks to me about the ways that he will change the face of

medicine once he finishes medical school in 20 years. Instead of becoming a famous tennis player, or owning a large mansion one day like his peers and fellow focus students, Blake's goal is to cure cancer—and with his determination and smarts, it would not surprise me if he did. He is motivated by his mom, and his ultimate fear of losing her too early in life, and this can honestly be a positive and a negative, because he does not enjoy the regular aspects of being a kid. Blake wants to watch science videos, and learn things about cancer, and spends a lot of his free time researching his mother's specific disease.

Regarding school, Blake sees it as a stepping stool for where he needs to be to cure cancer, and given he is such a bright student, it does not take much for him to understand concepts. As noted previously, he is one of my math talkers, and catches on to concepts so quickly that he often becomes bored. He excels in math and in oral presentations, and his honest and only least successful subject is reading because he does not push himself. If it was up to him, he would continue to read books for 3rd and 4th graders (as noted previously). While he is not motivated by school, he is a student that cannot pay attention and still receive a 3 in most subjects. With his support system at home, he will always turn in his best work (both classwork and homework) if mom has gotten a chance to see it first, and is driven by the need to please both of his parents and impress his younger siblings. His personal support system will be what continues to drive who he is as a person, and his mother will be who keeps him on the straight and narrow for as long as she can before the intrinsic nature of what he needs to do to end up where he wants to kick in.

Action Plan

Like that of my first two focus students, I reflected on my comments on Blake's report card as my starting point for his action plan. My comments were as follows:

Blake shows great interest and enthusiasm for learning. Blake expresses ideas exceptionally well in written language. His oral presentations are always captivating and informative. He has enriched the class with his knowledge and extensive reading. He continues to do excellent academic work and is especially strong in math, and has been moved into the enrichment group during math. He demonstrates an exceptional ability to understand and explain math and science concepts and I hope to never see that passion go away. While Blake is a strong student, he can be easily distracted, which leaves many of his in class assignments incomplete requiring him to finish them at home a lot. Please encourage Blake to complete his assignments and homework before moving on to other activities. Overall, Blake can always be counted on to be trustworthy and reliable, and incredibly kind. He has done an excellent job as our class representative student council and is an excellent student leader.

As Blake progresses through the rest of this academic year, my action plan for him includes:

1. Sitting him close to me and close to the front of the classroom to ensure that he finishes classwork in a timely manner
2. Providing Blake with small rewards for completing work
3. Providing Blake with the necessary disciplinary action when he is not working and is goofing off in class
4. Remaining in constant communication with his mother, to check in on both her condition, as well as how Blake is feeling
5. Providing a weekly progress report to Blake and his parents about things he succeeded at that week as well as things he needs to work on
6. Providing Blake extra class time and test time for classwork and tests
7. Continuing to push and challenge Blake to challenge himself with classwork while providing him the emotional support he needs on any given day
8. Checking in with Blake daily and having time set aside to speak with him should he need support
9. Find a sour candy that Blake enjoys to work on his oral fixation needs

As the academic year and his mother's health progresses, I will adjust Blake's above strategies accordingly. I want to make sure that I am not hurting him more than I am helping him by hovering too much, and have expressed this to Jocelyn, his mother. The two of us are working on communicating classwork and assignments that should have been completed, and her following up with Blake. While he can be a student that at times doesn't seem to care, he is honest to a fault and will let her know what he is and is not working on currently. Academically, Blake is beginning

to fall behind because of the emotional toll that he is currently going through, and by his mother and I working together, I am hoping that we can get him back on track. He is still testing well, so my focus will be Blake's completion of classwork, in class participation and completion of homework. In all of the strategies that I will be continuing to, or beginning to implement, research shows that I will want to be mindful of Blake's temperament. As stated in *The Toolkit to Help Educators Support Children of Parents with Serious Illness*, "temperament refers to a child's consistent manner of reacting to his or her environment and coping with potentially stressful situations. Aspects of children's temperaments include his or her baseline mood, activity level, curiosity or shyness around new situations or people, level of attentiveness and persistence with challenging tasks and flexibility and adaptive thinking" (Russel, et al., 2014, p. 10). While Blake's mom is currently "in the clear," and is not receiving any treatment, it is important to be mindful of the headspace that her disease has put Blake in. I will need to support Blake in his: ability to feel strong emotions without acting on them, ability to focus attention and persist with challenging tasks, work on his self-control (both body wise and focus wise) and his overall ability to feel comfortable with this new transitional space that he is in (Russel, et al., 2014, p. 10).

My three focus students opened my eyes to many pre-conceived notions that I had about students and families that lived in Claremont, even considering I grew up in a neighborhood like it. The home visits enabled me to see what it really means to live in Claremont. I was exposed to a student who lived in a small condo with his two siblings because his mother had cancer and they had decided to downsize to make sure they had the money to get her the best treatment in the world. I visited a house that made me feel like I was family, and had some very southern and traditional values that could be seen in the way their children addressed adults, the way Felix was so incredibly respectful, and the kindness he displays every day. And finally, I visited a house that

matched what I believed each of my students lived in, large, cold, and modern. Where the parents placed an incredible amount of pressure and expectations on their child, and the anxiety and low self-esteem their daughter brings to school every day is a direct reflection of the way her parents believe money is all they need to have a successful student. I look forward to examining how these three students fit into the larger city of Claremont and look forward to continuing to have my beliefs challenged in good and rectifying ways.

PART C: *What is happening in my community, school, and classroom?*

Ethnography part C has been a challenge for me since the very beginning of this all-encompassing, comfort-zone stretching, and reflective 18-month long assignment. While part A was a direct and incredibly personal reflection, and part B was about my specific students, their needs, and ways that I could provide the best and most targeted support for them, part C specifically deals with “what is happening in my community, school, and classroom?” While speaking on my classroom comes naturally, and even speaking about the school that I work at is becoming more and more natural as time passes, providing information about a city/community that I do not live in, presented as an unusual and uncomfortable challenge. Needing to be “all about the community” in which I teach, as well as, school dynamics and demographics, I couldn’t help but notice that I was being asked to examine the subtleties that make the city of Claremont what it is. There is power in our words, and even more so, in the written word. Communities have, and continue to be judged and compared to one another based on both written “research” and public “opinion,” and yet, examining the community was a vital component of this section of our thesis. Teaching in Claremont has been an incredible opportunity, and the “dream” city to teach in. It’s right there in the motto that was told to us on the first day of teacher orientation “Claremont Unified School District is the district where teacher’s dreams are accomplished.” The district’s vision of “Each CUSD student being recognized and valued, inspired to be a lifelong learner, and prepared to be a contributing member of our global society,” is politically correct, inclusive, and incredibly vague (“About Claremont Unified School District”). What does it mean to prepare a child to be a contributing member of our global society? How are students valued? Does this statement mean that no one is excluded? Does this statement erase the very real existence of challenges and struggles that my students, as well as the students within the community as a whole, encounter?

Many believe that because I work in a predominately white, relatively affluent area, that my students don't have the same issues as those who are from a lower socio-economic and people of color neighborhood. Again, it is right there in the mission statement of the district, and is highlighted even more in the history of Claremont from the city's website. The website states:

Much of what Claremont is today is the direct result of actions taken by the community's founders more than 100 years ago. Trees planted at the turn of the century now compete with nearby mountain peaks for dominance of the local skyline. The Claremont Colleges have become some of the nation's most highly respected educational and cultural institutions. The historic core remains a vital residential and retail district, one of the last true "downtowns" in the region. And the spirit of Claremont's original "town meeting" form of self-governance lives on in today's active and involved citizenry—citizens who continue to build on the successes of the past in order to ensure an even brighter future(History of Claremont, 2019).

Nicknamed the "city of trees and PhDs," education is so engrained in the community that it is within the first few sentences of the city's website and lies there in its nickname. What an immense amount of pressure children must feel, to live in a city where education is so valued, that those where school does not come naturally, must encounter a multitude of struggles and challenges. Working in a district that is so similar to the city I personally went to school in and grew up in, I see firsthand the impact that teachers, community members and schools have on young learners—and I hope to contribute to that a sense of accomplishment, pride in who they are, and most importantly, the element of finding their passion, who they are, and using the city's resources and opportunities to help them become the best person they can be.

The Micro-Community

Located approximately 30 miles east of Los Angeles, Claremont is a prestigious community consisting of 36,015 (census 2016) residents and 140 acres of developed parks and tree-lined streets. The city's development has always been closely associated with the

academically acclaimed Claremont Colleges: a consortium of five undergraduate and two graduate higher education institutions. The community takes pride in its rich cultural, educational and architectural heritage, as well as its small-town atmosphere (City of Claremont Profile). The city itself incorporated on October 3, of 1907. The median age of the community is 39.6, with an ethnic breakdown that looks like the following: White – 67.7%, Hispanic – 24.1%, Asian – 15.6%, African American – 4.3%, Two or more races – 4.5% and Native American – 0.7% (City of Claremont Profile). This ethnic breakdown is especially interesting, considering the history of Claremont. As noted on the History of Claremont page of the website, “the first known inhabitants of the Claremont region were the Serrano Indians, as evidenced by the discovery of a Serrano village on a mesa of a few hundred yards’ northeast of the intersection of Foothill and Indian Hill Boulevards. In 1771, as the Spanish period in California began, Mission San Gabriel was founded, stretching from the San Bernardino Mountains to San Pedro Bay. Claremont was part of this vast tract, and many of the Serrano’s were employed as shepherds for the padres” (History of Claremont, 2019).

As previously noted, the city of Claremont is nicknamed, the city of “trees and PhDs.” The city earned this title from the Claremont Colleges as well as the many trees that are planted throughout the city. When getting off the 10 freeway, it is easy to make the distinction between Pomona/Montclair and Claremont. When you are driving toward the Claremont side of the freeway, you are immediately greeted by trees, and the residential neighborhood is covered in “elephant toes,” which are the rocks that line the streets and citrus trees. Citrus ranches spread out across all the foothill communities. Claremont growers established one of the earliest citrus cooperatives for marketing and shipping citrus fruit, a model that led to the organization of the Sunkist cooperative (History of Claremont, 2019). Claremont is the picture of “small-town”

southern California. There is a downtown area, also named “the village,” with a multitude of shops and restaurants, and the city is dominated by people walking or riding a bike. An incredibly eco-friendly community, Claremont prides itself on recycling, walking (to save your carbon footprint), composting, raising chickens, and shopping at the local farmer’s market. Historically, the Santa Fe Railroad provided the impetus for the creation of the city of Claremont. The city was one of about 30 town sites laid out between San Bernardino and Los Angeles in anticipation of a population explosion resulting from the arrival of the railroad. As the colleges were growing and expanding, and the local citrus industry was taking off, Claremont was shaped and influenced largely by Mexican and Mexican American culture. Men and women, who were often new arrivals from Mexico, served as pickers and worked in the packing houses. In addition to supporting the thriving citrus industry, Mexican labor contributed greatly to the early construction of the Claremont Colleges, including skilled crafting of many stone structures and ornamental features. The early Spanish, college, and citrus industry influences can still be seen in the community today. There are lush remnants of citrus and oak groves and a physical character reminiscent of Claremont’s Spanish heritage and college-town influence (History of Claremont, 2019).

According to the city website, the city is known throughout the region for its stately and beautiful single-family homes, many of which hold historical significance. Claremont also offers condominiums, townhouses, and apartment living (City of Claremont Profile). My students encompass these types of housing—as they range in socioeconomic backgrounds. I have a student that lives in the mansions at the top mountainside of the city, and a student that lives in a smaller, but equally as beautiful single-family home closer to the city’s downtown area of “the village.” I also have students who live in the surrounding condominiums close to the school, and many of my students walk to and from school (or are dropped off in the morning and walk home), often utilizing

the ramp up to the “turf” and city park to get to their homes faster. In balance with residential development, there are thriving commercial and major industrial centers in Claremont as well as the historical downtown “village.”

The city of Claremont has a multitude of services, including but not limited to: abandoned property registration, building inspections, community outreach, crime tip hotline, “do not knock” registry, dogfighting 24-hour tip line, electronic waste disposal, graffiti removal, cemeteries, recreational classes, senior programs and transit services (City of Claremont City Services). While this is just a brief list of the services the city offers, it is a clear picture of what the city values, community, cleanliness/beauty, looking after its elders, and providing a variety of recreational activities. This is where the city of Claremont thrives. If there are resources that it does not have, the city council is more than willing to hear out a situation or circumstance, and have often created a department to address a concern if it is prominent enough. The community prides itself on inclusion and opportunity. While the city has a lot of benefits and assets, it has faced some racial tension and elements of being an affluent, predominately white neighborhood. While there is no documented research on the racial tensions that exist, if the teachers are any reflection of how people of color are treated, and how people of color are valued, then it is a city that is trying to overcome a lot of the racial disparities that have existed in the last 50 years.

Community Events & Community Members

The city of Claremont is anchored in its arts and culture, and highlights unique artists. Befitting a town with seven renowned colleges, Claremont is rife with cultural treasures. With several unique museums, a thriving arts and music scene, an incredible farmer’s market that highlights small businesses, Claremont epitomizes a community that values any opportunity to be outdoors, and a community that values its children; the city of Claremont thrives off the culture

that seeps through its pores. I had the privilege of attending a holiday music festival in the village, where the elementary school I teach at, as well as the rest of the elementary schools in the districts music programs came together and put on an outdoor concert—hosted by the students themselves. Located right in the heart of downtown, in front of the movie theater and between a multitude of shops and restaurants, the concert was at the center of the city’s attention. There were about 100 students in attendance, there to sing for their families and community members. The song choices varied from “Jingle Bell Rock” to “Silent Night,” and incorporated Jewish, Chinese, Hindi and Christian religions. The sea of students of from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, and seemed to bring the community together under the premise of the holidays and support. I ran into a lot of my students, colleagues and their families at the concert, as well as my principal. This was an event that I took my husband to, and it was nice to have my students and co-workers meet him. As for the people I did not know, everyone was nice and polite, and looking forward to hearing young children sing. I even recall overhearing a person say, “this is the next generation of voters, I hope that they stay this innocent forever.” I took that statement to heart, what an honor to be in the presence of the next generation of people who will one day make the decisions and laws that will affect my future children and grandchildren. The event ended with everyone singing the “joy to the world,” and it felt like for a moment in time, regardless of what was going on in politics and all over the world, we could take an hour and come together. I have attended other events in the city of Claremont, including soccer and basketball games for a few of my students, and have gotten the opportunity to speak with people who are intrigued that a teacher is there to support a student, and wanting to know more about me. Within these conversations, I learned so much more about the city of Claremont. For example, there is a one large basketball league, and at the end of the basketball season, all the kids get to play one large “pick up” game with one another. I also was

asked a multitude of questions, including the all-encompassing “are you and your husband thinking about buying a place in Claremont?” When I am asked that question, I always respond with “why should I?” the responses I get usually include: it would be convenient for me to work and live in the same neighborhood, the Claremont is a progressive city where a young Black, professional, family could really flourish, that I would be able to take advantage of all the resources the city offers to offer, etc.

There are incredibly opportunities that come from having 7 colleges (including the 2 graduate universities) within the city of Claremont. For example, I have a student from Scripps who is a graduating senior, who wanted experience working in a classroom because she was applying for the Teacher Education Program at CGU, and wanted any opportunity she could take advantage of. Because she does not have a car, being near her dorm has been integral for me having her volunteer in my class. There are also programs that are more structured from the Claremont Colleges that are not just individual students looking to give back. For example, my class was given an incredible opportunity to participate in an environmental science program called L.E.E.P. The Leadership in Environment Education Partnership is a coordinated science program between Room 27/CUSD and Pitzer College. L.E.E.P. provides hands-on labs, in an outdoor facility at the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability, at the Bernard Biological Field Station. This field trip takes place on Friday mornings over a 10-week period, beginning in next Friday. This comprehensive science program allows students to work in small groups with college mentors as they address Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in life science. As a part of their environmental justice class, 7 students will be helping me change my students lives through hands-on science. In addition to this amazing program, the city of Claremont offers a

multitude of non-profit organizations who are looking to give back to the community, and unsurprisingly, most of them revolve or are grounded in education.

The community services are extensive, and honestly reflect a community that wants to help their own. From my research, I did not find any glaring “gaps” in services provided.

School Site Research

The beautiful campus of Chaparral Elementary School is in a quaint corner of Chaparral Drive, off a relatively busy main street. The school is tucked into this corner, that backs onto a reserve, and exists as if there has never not been a Chaparral Elementary School. In other words, the houses around the campus seem to hug the school, and seem to mold around its very existence. When you turn onto our street, you immediately see the digital marquee that is on the corner of Mills and Chaparral, and includes a warm, and welcoming message from our principal. On the steps walking up to the front office, is written the saying “be safe, be kind, be respectful, be responsible,” the four elements of our culture and climate (previously known as PBIS) principles, and the very foundation of our campus. As you walk through the front office, you are immediately greeted with student work, and photos of our faculty smiling at you. Walking around the campus, there are many signs that have been painted by former students, with the sayings “be safe, be kind, be respectful, be responsible” and there are students “scribbles” outside of each teacher’s classroom. This scribble may seem silly, an individualized scribble done by each student in each class, that is then laminated and placed next to the entrance of the classroom, but what it reflects is a principal who took the time to come around and teach a lesson on everyone being different, unique, special and important to our school in their own way. Each scribble was drawn by the 650 students our campus houses. We have a Kindergarten area of campus that includes its own playground (1-3), a primary playground with the respective primary classrooms surrounding it,

and upper grade playground with a smaller jungle gym area, but more room for students to play basketball, tetherball, and an opening to the “turf,” which is a patch of grass that is part of the park further up Mills. Students have a ramp that lead to the “turf,” and with adult supervision (either during P.E. or lunch recess), can play flag football, walk for the 100-mile club, or lay in the grass. There are lunch tables that are both under a shade area, as well as on the grass for students to eat their snack and lunch at, and the rest of the classrooms.

Some challenges to the campus layout include the idea that with the amount of construction happening on the campus, as well as with us reopening the access to the “turf” which is also a part of a city park, we are a pretty open campus. In being an open campus, should we ever need to be on a true lockdown, instead of a lockdown drill, I am not sure if we would be able to block all our exits. I also want to comment that while it makes sense that the older classrooms don’t have two exits (or do because they have large slider doors), the new classrooms have one exit. My classroom specifically has a lot of windows, but none of which can be opened, and the new set of classrooms back up into the turf, providing a lot of access for people to get onto our campus, and specifically into these classrooms. Another challenge is that the playground opens into the street. More specifically, while there is a gate that closes off the playground while students are on campus, a guard is required to sit there to make sure that students do not try to go after a ball that flies over the fence, or try to open the gate to retrieve an item. Other than these small things, the campus is incredibly welcoming, green, and thoughtful of the fact that it is an elementary school students, dealing with children from the ages of 5-12. While there are challenges to our campus layout, there are some significant benefits as well. These benefits include many students needing to fulfill their internships from their various majors looking for a way to give back to the community. As

previously mentioned, the city of Claremont is an incredible hub for resources and opportunities due to the Claremont Colleges.

In terms of reputation, of the 7 elementary schools in the district, Chaparral and Condit Elementary rank at the top 2. Chaparral and Condit have always had a friendly rivalry, and this competition has allowed our campus to flourish and succeed academically. Each of the schools have their own reputation, Chaparral's being that of a disciplined and fun filled school, that has high expectations. A large percentage of the parents whose children come to Chaparral are professors at the colleges that are walking distance from our campus. As stated on the school website, Chaparral Elementary School considers itself a community of learners, which includes students, staff, parents, and business/community partnerships. Through this process, the school is preparing our students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. Ours students experience a balanced, rigorous, and challenging curriculum that allows for individual differences and fosters responsible citizenship in a safe and orderly environment ("About Chaparral"). In 2010, Chaparral was recognized as a California Distinguished School as well as in 2014 as a California Business for Education Excellence Honor Roll School. Two "signature practices" that contribute to these special awards were: 1) improving academic performance and 2) addressing the social-emotional needs of a balanced student.

The staff is incredibly eager and capable of providing students with excellent programs of instruction and a warm, caring environment in which to grow. Together with our parents/partners in education, we have high expectations for our students in academics and citizenship. Students learn through an integrated curriculum in which language arts, mathematics, history/social studies, science, physical education, art and music develop together through thematic units which often incorporate technology and support the California State Standards and the CUSD Goals.

Technology integration is a priority at Chaparral. We have an up-to-date computer lab which is used weekly by each class. Ceiling mounted projectors and televisions display curricular content from each teacher's document camera and computer/iPad. Every teacher has an iPad and has been or is being trained on how to use iPads to enhance instruction and student engagement. Classrooms in grades 3-6 have daily access to one-to-one iPad carts and classrooms in grades K-2 also have 6 iPads to be used during centers or special activities for student use. Meeting the needs of the whole child is also important at Chaparral. Each student visits the library on a weekly basis, where an engaging environment and thousands of current books can be found and checked out for the week (as well as renewed as needed). Chaparral has had the amazing opportunity of having credential Physical Education teachers and for upper grade students, and a vocal music instructor who meets with each class weekly, as well as a monthly art program ("About Chaparral").

Chaparral has a student population of around 670 students, and a staff/faculty that support them in a variety of needs. In doing this, it is required that the staff be supportive of one another, and no IEP, STC, 504, etc. meeting is taken without the support of the previous teacher, the current teacher, the principal and other resources. As a new teacher, the school has not only been a welcoming place, but has provided the many resources and wisdoms of the many senior teachers that are on campus. The only informal policy that specifically comes to mind would be that our principal has a very "open door" policy. While many principals claim this, Ann literally only closes the door if another teacher is speaking with her and the matter is private. She takes text messages and phone calls, speaks out ideas and talks through hardships with students and/or parents. She aids in meetings with parents if needed, and directs parents to speak with the teachers directly if they come to her with concerns about something that is occurring in the classroom with their child. Chaparral implements Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) as part of the

Claremont Unified School District Initiatives. PBIS is an implementation framework that is designed to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. It is a team-based approach that includes establishing and teaching behavior expectations for the common school areas and classrooms. It includes an acknowledgement system for appropriate behaviors, a responsive system for non-expected behaviors, and data based decision-making procedures for monitoring the implementation. There are consequences for students who are in violation of the school rules. The staff and faculty have developed a progressive discipline program that begins with interventions the teacher uses in the classroom. These interventions may include notes and telephone calls home and progresses to a discipline referral to the school principal.

In terms of how the school specifically deals with students who may need special attention, including but not limited to our English Learners, LGBTQ students, Gifted Students, etc., Chaparral has an on-site credentialed teacher who specifically focuses on EL students, and training teachers in how to best meet the needs of their specific students. Gifted students are not the exception at Chaparral, they are the norm, and in being so, are provided opportunities daily to receive enrichment resources that is integrated into their curriculum. The school is currently in talks with the district to potentially have a gender-neutral bathroom, and has an on-site student counseling service for students who need counseling to deal with issues (including but not limited to: anxiety, familial concerns, etc.) that directly affect their school work. All of the large policies, and the general feeling from the staff and faculty is a direct reflection of the top down and bottom up policy that our principal has incorporated into our daily routines, and is also a direct reflection of the school's vision and mission (Chaparral Family Handbook 2018-2019).

School Mission & Demographics

After speaking with my principal, neither one of us knew who created the original version of Chaparral's vision, but she informed me that she had updated it since becoming principal.

Chaparral's current vision is part of what I quoted previously, stating:

At Chaparral Elementary School, we consider ourselves a community of learners, which includes students, staff, parents, and business/community partnerships. Through this process, we are preparing our students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. Our students experience a balanced, rigorous, and challenging curriculum that allows for individual differences and fosters responsible citizenship in a safe and orderly environment.

This vision is available on the school's website. While it is not a visual in the office, it is something the entire school lives by. In regards to my own personal classrooms connection to the school's vision, I think it is important to note that I based my "classroom conduct and beliefs" based on the school's purpose and vision. My classroom vision states the following:

In this classroom we believe:

- Books open doors
- Everybody deserves respect
- Friendship is kindness
- In excellence
- Learning is beautiful
- Learning is hard work
- Listening is polite
- Manners matter
- Mistakes happen and it's ok
- Our words have power
- The responsibility is ours
- Thinking is hard work
- We're a team
- Hard work makes a difference

While these started out as just something that was on my wall, I believe that my classroom culture has been shaped by the school's vision and my self-created classroom beliefs that are drawn from this.

While there are a lot of benefits of having a school who wants to highlight critical thinking and problem solving, as well as responsible citizenship, I think that it is important to note that the school's vision does not include anything about inclusivity or diversity—and the school culture shows that in small and micro-aggressive ways. Chaparral Elementary serves 659 students in grades Kindergarten – 6 and the student: teacher ratio is 26:1. The school site is ranked within the top 20% of all 9,595 schools in California (based off of combined Math and Reading proficiency testing data) for the 2015-16 academic school year (Chaparral Elementary School Profile (2018-19)). Minority student enrollment is 50% of the student body (majority Hispanic/Latino), which is lower than the California state average of 76% (Chaparral Elementary School Profile (2018-19)). According to the school's profile, the diversity score of Chaparral is 0.67, which is more than the diversity score at state average of 0.41. The school's diversity has stayed relatively flat over five academic years. As stated within the Chaparral Elementary School Profile (2018-19), the ethnic breakdown is as follows:

Native American/American Indian: n/a

Asian: 15%

Hispanic/Latino: 25%

Black: 3%

White: 50%

Two or more races: 7%

The students who are eligible for Free Lunch is 16% and the students who are eligible for Reduced Lunch is 3%. (Chaparral Elementary School Profile (2018-19))

The nearest high school to Chaparral is Claremont High School (0.7 miles away) and is the only high school in the district. The nearest middle school is El Roble Intermediate (1.6 miles away), and is the only middle school in the district, although there is a large percentage (no numbers available) of students from Chaparral and the other top ranking elementary school in Claremont (Condit Elementary) who attend middle school outside of the district (Upland Unified

and Western Christian Private) for middle school and return for Claremont High School. The faculty breakdown is very similar to that of the student body, there are only a few faculty members of color, and only 3 male teachers.

In terms of who thrives at Chaparral and who does not, that is a difficult thing to pinpoint. As a new teacher, I have tried to be observant of the way situations are handled, specifically for students of color. I have not noticed that there is a specific focus on students of color being deemed “behavioral” issues, and there seems to be a strong surge of respect from the faculty to the students. There are some older teachers that I have spoken with (who are former teachers of my current students), who do seem a bit jaded toward students, but again this is not based on a racial demographic.

Parent involvement is perhaps the most incredible aspect of working at Chaparral Elementary. This is something that was highlighted even in my interview for the position. As I interviewed, a now colleague, inquired how I would feel about a) becoming part of the Chaparral family and b) how did I feel about a parent “body” that was just as involved as the faculty on campus? I remember thinking that it was interesting that I was being asked this during my interview process, but also realized then, that the parent involvement was huge component of the student body and overall culture of the campus. There are monthly “family night” events held on campus, including but not limited to movie nights, family paint night, etc. Parent Faculty Association (PFA) meetings are almost always full on a monthly basis, and parents actively advocate for their child. The school website has a parent resources tab that highlights things such as practice CAASPP Tests, technology based resources, a “parent locker,” where there are the basics of our disaster plan, school policies, 30 questions to ask your child, etc., information on the district curriculum, single plan for student achievement, safety, and the parent handbook. I have

had a multitude of parents this year who embody the overall campus culture. While there are some huge benefits of working in a district with such privilege, it is important to note that a majority of my parents are college professors at the nearby colleges, and a) expect the teacher to be at their beck and call, and b) have sometimes unrealistic expectations of their child. This parent involvement is not just a school site specific thing, it is a district fostered and nurtured relationship. Claremont Unified has a “parent engagement calendar” that is really more of a “table” that has 4 categories (CUSD Mental Health, District Committees, College Awareness Workshops, and Parenting Workshops), and is broken down by month. For example, for the month of February 2019, there is an “Active Parenting in Elementary” workshop that is on Wednesday evenings for the month. The calendar highlights things such as internet safety, 5-6 grade healthy digital behaviors, newcomer parent workshops, adverse childhood experiences workshops, “safe talks,” parents as allies and PIQUE and foster parent workshops.

Classroom Exploration

My classroom is genuinely my happy place. It feels like me, it smells like me, and has become my “home away from home” in more ways than one. As you walk up the walkway to the classroom, on the window is a bulletin board sign that states, “But what if I fall, oh but, my darling, what if you FLY?!” In conjunction with the artwork on my door—a quote stating “Your wings ALREADY exist, all you have to do is FLY,” surrounded by one of my Bitmoji’s flying in a paper airplane and butterflies with each of my student’s name on it, this theme of flying/flight is an important and intentional one. “Song of Solomon” by Toni Morrison is my all-time favorite novel, and the theme of flight is an integral part of the story. The novel begins and ends with images of flight and abounds with allusions of flying throughout its pages. In the novel, flight for Mr. Smith is an attempt to free himself and by proxy, all African Americans from imprisonment, segregation,

poverty their poverty arising from racism and oppression, and their ancestors' kidnapping them from Africa. While Milkman never fully achieves "flight," the idea of flying as an escape to something that no one has ever achieved before, as a passage to one's wildest dreams and passions has always stuck with me. As a young scholar, I think that incorporating small themes from the very moment my students walk into the classroom teaches them the passion that comes along with being a scholar, or as they would deem it, a "nerd." Morrison's aesthetic concept for the novel of "Song of Solomon," came to be after the death of her father, who, according to her candid declarations in the Forward, became her muse for the novel: "I had no access to what I planned to write about until my father died" (Morrison, 2016). She ends her Forward with the words, [W]ithout ever leaving the ground [Pilate] could fly. My father laughed" (Morrison, 2016). The book Epigraph is a tribute to Morrison's father, as well as a premise of the story and reads: the fathers may soar, and the children may know their names (Morrison, 2016). Starting with the source of Morrison's inspiration, her dead father, it is safe to say that first and foremost, the significance of "flight" in the novel is release from earth-boundedness into the freedom of a transition or passion. While I am only one part of my students' journey, I hope that they learn the bravery and power of "flight," and will continue to use it as a theme for my classroom.

While I moved classrooms mid-year this academic year, both of my classrooms provided me and ultimately, my students, with a sense of comfort. There are bright colors, organization and order, a large library that encompasses my love (and hope for my students' future love of) books, artwork, and cleanliness. The students sit in a "U" shape formation, very like a seating chart that a lot of college professors may choose to do; my time in higher education has entered my classroom in many ways. As stated in my teaching philosophy, I wanted to incorporate a "top down" approach, that gave the students' a sense of autonomy and responsibility in the classroom. The

classroom is a place that my students maneuver with ease, and clearly feel responsible for, as evidenced in the way they clean it, take care of it, and want it to be a certain way. Specific efforts I have made to ensure that my classroom feels welcoming and safe for students includes having the students' work on the walls, encouraging and motivational posters of people of all different races and backgrounds, a "reading graffiti" wall that allows students to find quotes from books that they specifically find endearing, and allows them to write it directly on the wall, and much more. My classroom is based specifically on a routine. The students know what to do when they come into the classroom, and act accordingly. My routine is relatively consistent, even with all the inconsistencies that exist in teaching, and looks a lot like the following:

Agenda

Bell Ringer (only done on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays)

Math

Recess

Language Arts (including novel study, grammar, spelling, etc.)

Lunch

Silent Reading time (at least 20 minutes a day except for Wednesdays)

Science or Social Studies

There have been many times where a teacher will ask me "can't you just change math to after recess?" to which I usually respond, "no, I don't want to interrupt the structure that I have built in." While I know that sometimes, we need to continue to do math after recess, or that language arts won't take as long as the entire 90-minute block, there is not a lot that shifts in this routine/schedule. If we have an assembly, or our new LEEP program, I adjust my lessons to reflect the fact that my students may not have math on a certain day because we are not available in the morning. This seems "particular," but it has created a sense of stability and normalcy for my students that I would not change for the world.

As I move through my daily schedule, I try to find ways to have students relate what we are learning to knowledge they have from home. If there are opportunities to specifically highlight

cultural knowledge or familial knowledge, I do this. The students have a writing journal that is an integral component of our daily classroom life, and provides the students to connect a writing prompt (although they are not always promoted), to their everyday lives and experiences. I find that doing this, highlights things that they would not deem “smart enough,” or “worthy enough” of being mentioned. While we have a lot of curriculum to get through, it is also important to me that my students have opportunities to community build, and learn about things that will help them be better human beings and make better choices that will affect the world. This is an intentional effort of addressing the social-emotional learning needs of my students, and sometimes includes having a morning meeting to address the “elephant in the room,” of gossip or unkind decisions that students’ are making that affect the “vibe” of our classroom.

When thinking about the vibe of my classroom, I want to highlight the diversity and uniqueness of my students. As mentioned previously, Claremont does not have the most racially diverse community, and yet, looking at the makeup of my class, you would not know this. My classroom is made up of 32 students (originally 33), in which 15 are girls and 17 are boys. I have 2 Black students, 8 Latino students, 4 traditional Asian students (Chinese and Pilipino), 1 Indian student and 17 white students. I have 2 students on a 504 plan, and 3 students on an IEP (one of which is in RSP and all three are in speech). I have 14 students who are considered “math enriched,” or enriched in other subjects, who would traditionally identify as a GATE student, and I would say they are the biggest group that I need to make accommodations for. My expectations are kept high, because my students are high achieving students who need to be pushed and challenged, for fear of them getting bored. I have an iPad for each student in my classroom (plus 2 additional iPads), keyboards to teach typing, a computer that I use to project PowerPoints daily, built in speakers and a television. The school has provided me with an endless level of supplies,

and between the school resources and parents who bend over backwards to make sure that I have what I need in the classroom, my resources are honestly limitless. I have a room mom who coordinates all our classroom parties and any donations I need for the classroom, and 2 moms who come a volunteer in my class weekly.

It has been an honor to work with these 32 (formerly 33) students, and I hope that I making as much of an impact on them as they have already made on me. While I have great days, I also have challenging days of dealing with micro-aggressions from colleagues or parents and must remind myself that I am truly shifting the narrative of what it means to be a Black woman in America teaching in 2019. I recently read a quote that perfectly encompassed the struggle and hope that I embody daily, regarding being a Black, female, teacher, and more importantly, embodies the goal of empowerment and pushing my students beyond their comfort zones as their confidant and teacher: “Dear Black Teachers, the curriculum may be outdated, the building may be ancient, but you keep your pedagogy forward thinking. Black teacher you are changing lives. Your very presence shifts the narrative. Your efforts are not unnoticed by those who matter. Thank you for your sacrifice of extra time and energy.”

PART D: Analysis of Teacher Effectiveness

At the beginning of this academic year, I wondered about the impact I would make on my students, and on the school that I felt so privileged to work at: would I make an impact? Would the administration and teachers' view of Black professionals change based on me working there? Would my students learn how to be kind, responsible, and thoughtful? Would my students learn some of the strategies they will need to be successful later on in their academic careers? Would they learn to have a love for reading? Would they ask questions about things that didn't seem right to them, learn to question where information was coming from and learn to find self-voice and autonomy? Would they be exposed to life-changing supplemented curriculum that ultimately shaped how they viewed the world? How would I remember my first year of teaching, and more importantly, how would my students remember their 5th grade teacher? Somehow, even though I have worked at Chaparral for almost 8 months, and even though there are only 48 school days left of the 2018-19 academic year, I hadn't been given a chance to reflect back on these questions and partake in small victories and powerful moments created for my students, until asked to write the concluding piece of this ethnographic narrative. Asking me big overarching questions such as: when I think about all of my students from a class-level perspective how are they doing? What have you done to cultivate progress in each focus student? What have I done to cultivate greater success in each student? What strategies were most and least effective within my classroom instruction? What are my areas of strengths and areas of growth? What does the academic progress of my students say about my own effectiveness and about the needed focus for my future professional development and growth? And what are my next steps as a practitioner? These questions allowed me the chance to thoughtfully reflect on what has been a blur of a year, and to be truthful and honest about the impact that I would make on my students.

The Whole Class Perspective

When evaluating my class as a whole, it was important to take into consideration where fifth grade students are developmentally. As stated in the introduction of Mike Anderson's (2011) instructional guide, *What Every 5th Grade Teacher Needs to Know About Setting Up and Running a Classroom*, titled "Knowing Fifth Graders,":

Fifth graders aren't just slightly bigger fourth graders. Besides showing physical changes, these children also tend to be different from their fourth grade selves in the social-emotional, cognitive, and language realms. That this is so shouldn't come as a surprise for teachers. Research tells us, and the experiences of seasoned teachers confirm, that children grow and develop on multiple fronts at once. Just as children's physical characteristics (height, weight, physical coordination, eyesight, and so on) change, so, too, do characteristics, such as attention span, friendship preferences, ability to think abstractly and sense of humor.

There are also specific physical, cognitive, and language characteristics that are pertinent to fifth graders developmentally, that also help me evaluate my class as a whole. Physically, fifth grade students: have large muscles developing quickly, are drawn to the outdoors and physical challenges, their handwriting may become messier than in fourth grade and due to growth spurts, are frequently hungry and can tire easily. (Anderson, 2011). Cognitively, fifth grade students: are good at memorizing facts, are increasingly able to think abstractly and are good at solving problems, enjoy rules and logic, enjoy collecting, classifying, and organizing, take pride in their school work and are able to concentrate for longer periods of time. (Anderson, 2011). In terms of language characteristics, fifth grade students: are expressive and talkative, like to explain things, have the ability to listen well and their interests in reading independently become stronger (insert). While keeping all of these developmental characteristics in mind, I think that my 2018-19 class (Anderson, 2011).

With the developmental characteristics of my class taken into consideration, there were three things I wanted to examine when providing a true reflection of my class: 1) My class's social/emotional state as 10 and 11 year old's who are world changers 2) the development of my class as true scholars and thinkers and 3) my class's academic progress for the 2018-19 academic year. As a class, I can honestly say that my students for the 2018-19 academic year are a gifted group of students, that defy what it means to be a 10/11-year old in 2019.

Academically, It has been difficult for me to group my students into the Kagan strategies of 1 = high, 2= high medium, 3= low medium, 4=low (Kagan & Kagan, 2000), because there would not be an equal number of students in each group for me to utilize a lot of Kagan strategies that are built off "ability groups." More importantly, while I have students who are low in one subject or another, I have no students that are "overall low," in every subject. As reported on the second trimester report cards, of my 32 students, 2 students received all 4s (4 = standards exceeded, 3 = standards met, 2 = standards nearly met, 1 = standard not met), 16 students received AT LEAST one 4, if not more, 6 students received all 3s and 8 students had at least one, but not more than two, 2s. No one received a 1 during the second trimester grading period on their report cards. This to me, is an accomplishment of high proportions, and was not something I was able to analyze until now. When broken down by subject, it has been even easier to assess the progress my students have made since the beginning of the school year:

Reading: Instead of having students take a required number of Accelerated Reader (AR) quizzes per trimester, or even per month, students and I conference at the beginning of each trimester about setting AR goals based on their reading levels, how quickly they read, and their reading interests. After speaking with students, and assessing both what they believe they are capable of (because I do not believe in limiting students just because they take longer to read), and what I believe they

are capable of, we set a goal of AR points for the trimester; knowing that each book has a certain level of books. For example, if there are students that are reading the Harry Potter series, these books average anywhere from 12 points to 44 points. The average point goal for my class is 80 points, and many students have goals that are well above that average. Students have excelled in reading and achieving their individual reading goals. In total, students in my class have read (this is based on them actually taking the AR quiz) a total of 25,948,154 words thus far.

Writing: Writing in our class is graded through a writing journal, student individual essays, group collaborations and writing within other disciplines. This has been the area that my students have struggled the most with this year, in that, I have incredibly high expectations for them. Only two students have received a 4 in reading (standard exceeded) on report cards, and I often find myself pushing my students to explore deeper connections through their writing, as evidenced in the following comment from a student on their recent second trimester report card:

I would love to see Eva continue to work on making a personal connection to her writing, and pushing herself to go below the surface of information. She has shown much improvement in her grammar and overall spelling, and her story plots are very imaginative and exciting, however, it would be great to see her work on adding more details about her characters and story settings, as well as finding connections to the books she is reading (as expressed in her reader's notebook).

An example of a student who has excelled in writing and who helps set the standard for exceeding in their writing abilities can be seen in the following second trimester report card:

It is always a pleasure to read his writing, and to get a firsthand view into what is going on in his mind when I am doing a read aloud, or when we are completing a science lesson or a novel study. His writing has always been a strong point, but I feel like he really pushed himself this trimester to become someone who has honed in on his craft, and lets his pencil do the talking.

Students have been asked to write informative research essays about specific explorers, write letters to authors of books that we have read during our novel study time, reflect on a weekly basis and make personal connections to their reading through their reader's notebook, explain a specific body part that they like and make deeper higher level learning connections to that body part in a writing sample about themselves, persuade their peers to "tesser" to different planets, cite text evidence, use dialogue and context clues to learn about a character and so much more in our writing curriculum. All of which, has pushed them to write more, examine and utilize the writing process, and fulfill goals of taking their writing to another level.

Math: For some of my students, math has always been a struggle, and yet, this year, there seems to be a "light at the end of the tunnel" for these same students. By incorporating models and fun and engaging math activities that use both the iPads and their math books and "paper/pencil" activities, my students have the best average on each math test throughout the entire 5th grade. My chapter test average has been at its lowest, 72% and at its highest, 86%, which for a class of 32 says a lot. The class average on ThinkCentral, which is the online math book that my students use on a daily basis (where students take their daily "exit ticket" quizzes, as well as complete their in class math work) is a 80%.

Science: Science has been a hard subject to assess, and because of this, I created worksheets that are done during the weekly mystery science lessons. These worksheets ask students to "think like scientists," and leave room for students personal notes, as well as have structured questions that go along with the video lesson. In addition, students take unit science tests. These are the two methods of data collection and analysis for science, but I also, on a more informal level, listen to the group discussions during the weekly science activities, make sure that students incorporate science specific language and consistently ask students to think like scientists. Overall science

seems to be the favored discipline throughout the entire class, and no student has received lower than a 3 on a report card grade (for both first and second trimester). Because students are so engaged with the science activities, they are able to comprehend the information on a deeper level. While there are students who do not receive 4s in science (because they do not go above and beyond in their notetaking, observations, assertions, etc.), I am incredibly pleased with how students have done in science both in actual observable data, and through class discussions and activities.

Social Studies: In Social Studies, there is a wide range from students who excel to students who struggle. This is because Social Studies is very data and information driven, and even in the most creative ways, still ask students to recall information from previous years as well as previous lessons completed this year, building off one concept to be applied to another. Students struggled with the states and capitals unit specifically, because it was all recall. It was hard to find ways for students to apply the information they were learning, and while they completed state projects, it was on an individual state, not on all 50 states. Testing was the only way for students to show what they knew in this unit, and even being broken down into 4 regions, the memorization of states and capitals was difficult. In terms of other units, specifically that of Native Americans and Explorers, students have been able to write essays to show what they know, and present poster boards. Overall, students have excelled in the discipline as a whole, but where memorization is required, students have struggled more.

Socially, my students have encountered new highs and low lows throughout this academic year. As noted by Hank Pellissier, a freelance writer on education and brain development and the founder and director of Brighter Brain Institute, “the fifth grade brain has created a unique “self” due to its one-of-a-kind neural pathways. The upgraded analytic ability also enables fifth graders

brains to become keenly, painfully aware of how they fit, or don't fit, into certain groups. Partnered with a dramatic imagination, students are often left feeling lonely and unaccepted, and like a social failure with a fragile self-esteem. Their friendships are rising in importance. This shift toward friends can make things alarmingly nasty if accompanied by peer group pressure, cliques, jealousy, possessiveness, and bullying" (). This seems to be true in terms of my 32 students. Many of my girls are learning what it means to be a friend, and many of my boys are learning the inappropriate humor that is often associated with 11-year-old boys in general. This social dynamic has been an interesting one in my classroom, filled with girl drama over finding the right friends, gossip, immature jokes and much more. While there have been these lows, I will say, I have noticed a sense of maturity and connection to thoughtfulness and responsibility in my students that I think has come from lessons on not being perfect, kindness, and taking care of one another.

Developing my students as scholars has been an integral strategy within my instruction, and ties directly into the instructional practices that I have facilitated student achievement. I have used specific instructional strategies such as having the students look at the TV screen in the front of the classroom at the beginning of the day for their directions (requiring students to be responsible for being on task), have given students short term and long term projects with a calendar that paces out where they should be with their projects (teaching long term and short term organizing and planning), I have required students to write down the daily agenda, including their homework (requiring them to be responsible for their learning and allowing them to understand what is going to be accomplished in that day). In addition to these strategies, I have implemented a sense of class discussion through Socratic seminars, providing critical and constructive criticism to a peer through "feedback friends," created a sense of self autonomy and responsibility by allowing students to always have access to school supplies, have taught a level of maturity and

trust through allowing students to move and work around the classroom as long as their work is being done, and much more. These strategies have enabled my students to go from being given instructions and following them, to allowing them to take responsibility for their learning and in essence, have created beginning scholars. I do believe that these strategies, as well as a host of strategies that I have not named, have enabled my students to grow tremendously in every discipline, and have specifically created higher level thinkers who question their information, know where to cite evidence, write in complete sentences always, use observation skills in disciplines outside of science, and most importantly, have facilitated the stepping stones needed to excel.

The Student Perspective

As noted in Part B of this narrative, I have 3 focus students this academic year that have challenged what it means to be a teacher, by finding the right strategies to better assess and teach to their particular needs. Each of my three students have excelled in their own ways, and while they may still have some areas of growth—some of which may always be an area of growth for them—have found a new groove as we progress through their fifth grade year in school.

Sabrina

Sabrina's action plan stated the following:

8. Continuing to let Sabrina take all tests at RSP. While she, along with her parents, have been trying to move away from having Sabrina take tests with our specialist, it will always be an option for her to. She continues to take math tests in RSP so that she can have word problems explained to her, and due to her accommodations, even if she takes the test within my class, I will explain to her what different questions mean for clarification and understanding on her part
9. I will allow Sabrina to set the pace for her learning. For example, Sabrina spent some vacation time recently in Argentina with family, and when she returned, we were getting ready to take a spelling test. She took the words home, and the following day took the spelling test. I asked if she wanted the score to count, and she said no, but that she wanted to get back into the swing of school. She will be taking the test next week, but is really beginning to drive her own education—which is admirable to see

10. I will continue to, and will be more conscious about, making sure that I am not going too fast with my instruction (especially when reading something aloud, or saying something verbally)
11. I will make sure that she is provided with a study guide for all tests (all students are, however, because of my focus students, this became more of a priority)
12. All instructions for major projects will be written down and articulated verbally
13. I will continue to set aside time to work with Sabrina on her reading and writing comprehension strategies
14. Sabrina will be given the opportunity to verbally express answers to me for tests and writing assignments both big and small

Of these statements, most of them came to fruition. In Sabrina's annual IEP meeting, her parents made the decision to cut back her time in RSP to two days a week (from 4 days) for only 30 minutes, and cut speech down to one day at 30 minutes. She has stopped going to RSP for tests, although the option is always there, and I have made an accommodation by allowing her to ask me a question on a test, and allowing her to sit next to me during tests. I have slowed my instruction down tremendously, and when giving a spelling test or other oral exam, she is the student I check in with to make sure that she is ready to move on. Sabrina is the student that has allowed me to realize that all of my students need study guides, and are given ample time to review and study for exams. We work on her reading daily, and her writing has improved. Overall, Sabrina has excelled in all subjects, and didn't receive any 1s on her second trimester report card. In fact, the comments in her second trimester report card stated the following:

Sabrina continues to be a sweet and kind student, who goes out of her way to help everyone in need. She is showing improvement in all subject areas. It is obvious that she spends time at home on her school work. Thank you for meeting with me and providing her with extra support at home. I have noticed that she has begun to put a tremendous amount of pressure on herself to be the "perfect" student, and want to encourage her to continue to do her best, even if her best isn't a perfect score. Overall, Sabrina is a very enthusiastic and energetic member of our class. She is very creative and enjoys telling stories of what is going on in her life, sharing her hard earned accomplishments, and music and art. She has really blossomed

during this grading period, and I look forward to what next trimester brings.

AR Goal: 8 Completed AR Points: 12.5 Number of AR Quizzes passed: 5

You did it Sabrina! I know that reaching this goal was a HUGE accomplishment, and not only did you reach it, you exceeded it! Continue to find books that you find interesting, and I know that you will achieve your third trimester goals!

Total AR Points (1st Trimester and 2nd Trimester): 14.9

While Sabrina has excelled, it has not been without some repercussions. As noted in her report card comments above, she has begun to put an immense amount of pressure on herself, and has become extremely attached to me emotionally. While I have enjoyed seeing her academics strengthen, I am now working on the social component of her learning disability as well as the social component of her household. Sabrina's mother is very involved in her life, which is great, but is also problematic for an 11 year old girl who listens in on her mother's conversations. Sabrina is influenced by her mother saying that she does not need certain girls to be her friends, that school should not be so hard, etc. and it has become something that I hope to work with Sabrina on before she is sent to 6th grade. In terms of opportunities, it is a huge accomplishment for Sabrina to no longer need to go to RSP for testing. I am able to work with her in the classroom, and this seems to work best for her.

In terms of recommendations for next year, I hope to see Sabrina continue to use RSP as a resource, and at the beginning of the year, go back to using RSP for testing until she gets her footing in her 6th grade class. I hope that her parents keep their word and continue to work with her reading and writing, and I hope that her 6th grade teacher finds books that are at Sabrina's reading level that enable to her confident in her abilities. I hope that her teacher sits her close to the front of the classroom, and slows down when giving instruction, as well as letting Sabrina take

multiple days (usually not needed), to finish a test. I hope Sabrina continues to take down notes (even on things that she doesn't think she needs). I hope that she begins to find a balance between studying and social life, and that she continues to work with her therapist on not putting so much pressure on herself. I would like to see her return to speech two days a week, in an attempt to work with the newer vocabulary and concepts that comes with being in the 6th grade, and would like to see her continue to utilize the resources that come along with her IEP.

Felix

Felix's action plan stated the following:

11. Continuing to have visual aids to coincide with what I am orally presenting for Felix to be able to take notes
12. Continue to have typed up assignment requirements and rubrics at the beginning of major assignments
13. Continue to work with Felix's mom on ways that I can adjust to make sure that Felix is the most successful student possible
14. Making sure that Felix is branching out and working with students that he would not normally work with
15. Making sure that Felix understands each assignments requirement and what he should be currently working on
16. Speaking with Felix on a regular (if not daily) basis to check in with him and see what he is not understanding
17. Providing Felix extra time on tests and assignments if needed
18. Providing Felix, a separate desk to work at for tests and quizzes
19. Allowing Felix to set the pace for his classwork, while still making sure he is on task
20. Eliminating some of Felix's nightly homework knowing that it takes him longer to complete assignments

Of this action plan, I would say everything has been implemented. Felix has been the student that has taught me that many more students (who do not have an IEP or 504 Plan), could use the elements written in his action plan. For example, having visual aids and providing written instructions as well as verbal instructions has been integral for Felix, as well as a lot of my other students success. I have monthly check-ins with Felix and his mom to discuss what he needs best, and with the approval of his family as well as Felix, have enrolled him in the school site counseling

to work with his need for everything to be perfect. His anxiety has elevated as we have progressed through this year, and the counselor seems to be making strides in how Felix internalizes elements of the classroom. I check in with Felix daily, even during a lesson, given his location to my desk, and I make sure that he is working with students as well as monitoring his competitive behavior. Overall, Felix has reached an ever higher level of learning in all subjects, and received all 4s on his second trimester report card. The comments in his second trimester report card stated the following:

Felix continues to be an exemplary student in all ways. He is always willing, prepared, and cooperative. He is an intensely passionate student, who will fight to find the right answer. His love for learning is contagious, and is an admirable quality that I hope never goes away. I am concerned about Felix's stress level in class. He is very capable, but tends to worry too much about every detail. I feel this is taking a toll on him, and per our previous conversations, I am happy to see him begin to tackle these complex emotions through the use of our school counselor. I look forward to seeing Felix continue to work on putting less pressure to be perfect on himself, especially when it comes to his writing. His concern to have everything written correctly prevents him from allowing his creative and imaginative writing. His writing is very matter of fact, and leaves no room for details (character development, setting, etc.). His reflective writing has improved tremendously, I would just like to see him work on providing details within his informative and research writing that adds to the overall piece.

AR Goal: 95 Completed AR Points: 44.8 Number of AR Quizzes passed: 2

WOW Felix! You have been reading non-stop, and even though your AR points weren't as high this trimester as they were in the first trimester, I know it is because you have been reading the Harry Potter Series, where the novels get progressively more challenging as you make your way through them (and grow as you grow). Take pride in what you have been able to accomplish with your reading! I look forward to what your reading in the 3rd trimester brings! Total AR Points (1st Trimester and 2nd Trimester): 135.5

The strategies implemented from Felix's action plan have worked wonders, specifically having instruction written on daily PowerPoints. I have noticed that Felix is particularly keen on reading what is on a slide, and will make sure that he understands what is going on by the instruction that is on the screen behind me. It is a great way to make sure that he understands the expectations, as well as the basics of knowing what is going on at any particular moment. While this has been successful, there are elements of instruction that have been challenging—specifically that of science. Using the mystery science curriculum has been a fun and engaging experience, where students are asked questions and given a “lecture” through mystery Doug through a video (that has a worksheet that goes along with the video to make sure students are retaining information). However, because the curriculum requires a video to be played, there is no space for Felix to understand what is going on. I pause to allow students to respond to the questions on the worksheet, but I notice that Felix often falls behind because it takes him a bit longer to process the information. While I have made accommodations to this, including pausing for longer and helping him with answers as his brain processes the information, I am concerned about where this will lead him in the 6th grade. It is to this that I say I hope that Felix has learned to speak up when he doesn't understand something, that I hope that he begins to express himself prior to getting frustrated. I have learned Felix's quirks, and plan to let his 6th grade teacher know about ways to best support Felix, including using written instruction, modeling instruction, slowing down when giving oral instruction, and if using a video, make sure to have the transcript of what is being said. I hope that Felix works on organizing his thoughts as well as his actual schoolwork, and can begin to articulate what things from a lesson don't make sense. I hope his 6th grade teacher is patient with him, and understands that when he understands a concept he TRULY understands it, and often looks for ways to verbalize his understanding that can lead to him blurting out.

Blake

Blake's action plan stated the following:

10. Sitting him close to me and close to the front of the classroom to ensure that he finishes classwork in a timely manner
11. Providing Blake with small rewards for completing work
12. Providing Blake with the necessary disciplinary action when he is not working and is goofing off in class
13. Remaining in constant communication with his mother, to check in on both her condition, as well as how Blake is feeling
14. Providing a weekly progress report to Blake and his parents about things he succeeded at that week as well as things he needs to work on
15. Providing Blake extra class time and test time for classwork and tests
16. Continuing to push and challenge Blake to challenge himself with classwork while providing him the emotional support he needs on any given day
17. Checking in with Blake daily and having time set aside to speak with him should he need support
18. Find a sour candy that Blake enjoys to work on his oral fixation needs

Blake has had a rough year, and while I have moved him closer to my desk to make sure he finishes his work, he is a work in progress as a scholar. He excels academically when he is on task, and does well on exams—partly to his own doing, and partly because he has a supportive home life that studies with him and keeps him on task at home. If he is given an assignment to take home, he brings in some of the best work I have ever seen from a 5th grade student. His mom and I remain in communication, not just about Blake's progress, but about any upcoming tests she has. I check in with Blake almost daily, and love to hear his stories about what is going on with his younger brothers, and providing him with sour candy for his oral fixation seems to have worked tremendously. If I feel as though Blake is off task, I will ask him to answer a question—forcing him to get back on task. These strategies have helped tremendously with his success, although he has been having some rough social interactions. For example, at Astro camp, at the last minute, he pulled out of going ziplining because of a fear of heights, and had students (mostly his friends), making fun of this. He was emotionally distraught and still has not seemed to bounce back from

this friend betrayal and embarrassment. I have tried to provide comfort, it is a social enigma that he is learning to work though.

Overall, Blake has focused and excelled in all subjects. His report card reflects the hard work he has put in during the second trimester, he is one of my three students that received all 4s. The comments in his second trimester report card stated the following:

Blake continues to be a bright student, who does well when given instruction and gives 100% to his work when he is focused. He is making steady progress, however, he needs to learn to concentrate and to develop efficient study habits. He is a hard worker who tries hard, but he finds it difficult to stick to the task at hand and is easily distracted. He needs consistent guidance to complete tests, and is often found off task. When he is on task, or is able to complete the work at home, Blake's work is some of the best of the class. He is an excellent writer, who articulates himself well and understands the importance of providing details and text based evidence. I look forward to seeing Blake mature throughout the third trimester and become the role model that I know he is more than capable of. He truly is an exceptional student, both academically and socially. He possesses natural leadership qualities, an amiable personality and a confidence in academics with a passion for righting all of the wrong in the world. I look forward to seeing him work toward becoming a role model for his peers and finishing out the year strong.

AR Goal: 100 Completed AR Points: 63.7 Number of AR Quizzes passed: 10

I know you are reading Blake, and that is what counts! I admire your high goal setting for this trimester, and I know that you were frustrated you didn't achieve it, but think about what you have been able to achieve with your reading! Go into the third trimester proud of your accomplishments and ready to tackle achieving the next goal! Total AR Points (1st Trimester and 2nd Trimester): 116.1

As far as a recommendation for next year goes, my biggest recommendation to Blake would be: make sure that you focus and let the teacher know when you need more emotional support, make sure that you give each assignment you 100%, and that you distance yourself (in the classroom) from friends that you know can be distracting. Make sure that you continue to allow your fear of

losing your mom be your driving force for your academics, you can be the voice that changes the world! In terms of my recommendation for his teacher, I hope that they find a way to see that Blake is brilliant beyond his years, and is often bored with everyday instruction—but that this is hard to see because he takes so long to complete a task or an assignment. I hope the teacher opens up and lets Blake tell them what is going on in his life, and allows him to have off days. I hope that they understand that he puts a lot of pressure on himself as the oldest sibling, and that they allow him some reprieve in the classroom. I also hope that they understand that whatever is going on with his mom has a direct impact on Blake's in class work and behavior.

The Developing Professional Perspective

At the beginning of the school year, I was surprised by how small and young my incoming fifth graders seemed, and by almost the end of the year, I am thrilled that so many of my students have grown and reached amazing new developmental milestones. It is incredible to observe these changes—noticing, for example, how some students struggled to see others' point of view in September and then seeing them carefully consider everyone's options during project work a few months later. Actively supporting this growth and development is one of the greatest joys of teaching the fifth grade, and just as my students have had an incredible year of growth and change, I believe, that I too have had a year of maturity, reflection, growth and change that will hopefully enable me to come into the next academic year ready to make changes and adjust as I become more comfortable in my abilities as a teacher. This year has been filled with particularly difficult parents, whose expectations of their children as well as me as their child's teacher has stretched and pulled me in ways that I could have never imagined. I have to say that teaching is everything and nothing that I thought it would be, and this first year has shown me that the racial issues that are in the larger political universe of our nation, begin in elementary school. I have dealt with

racism as a Black female teacher, and have seen my students of color begin to truly understand what it means to have skin that is darker than that of their white counterparts. I have had fun connecting with my students, and finding ways to connect with each student. I have tried to have open and honest and transparent communication with parents, and feel a sense of pride in knowing that my parents have said nothing but great things for the most part. I have found great fun in learning about my students outside of the classroom (i.e. attending soccer game, and dance recitals, etc.), and think that I have done well at connecting with each individual student in one way or another. I do have students that I favor more than others, and students that I want to push and do push in ways that I don't for other students, but I think part of that is a) connection and b) knowing what my students can and cannot take.

My first year has been filled with insecurities, and a constant need to prove myself. I have found that my perfectionist nature is dangerous in teaching, forcing me to realize that I can't be perfect at everything, and that I can't be on top of everything, and at the same time, providing the very things that make me feel like I have to be on top of everything—students who are incredibly entitled, parents who have ridiculously high expectations, and my own expectations of myself. I found that examining my TPE clinical evaluation from the first semester, I put even more pressure on myself. I had three TPEs that were areas of growth at the end of last semester: TPE 3 – Understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning, TPE 4 – Planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students and TPE 5 – assessing student learning. While I had these areas of growth, I excelled in areas of student connection TPE 1 – Engaging and Supportive all students in learning, TPE 2 – Creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning, TPE 6 – Developing as a Professional educator. What is interesting about reflecting on these TPEs now, is that I would say TPE 6 is an area of growth for me, and TPE 4 is

one that I would have fought for, knowing that I plan instruction heavily in my classroom. I am hoping that by the end of this program, I have learned to speak up for what I know that I am doing, and push back against the powers that be about what I supposedly am not doing enough of. My students are a daily reflection of what I have been able to teach them, what they have internalized and what they need refreshers of. They are a daily reminder of the areas that I need to focus on, and are my biggest cheerleaders. Their academic progress speaks volumes to what I do both inside and outside of the classroom, and their thoughtfulness and kindness toward myself, one another and complete strangers is reflection of what they experience everyday both at home and in the classroom.

I listen to Rita Pierson's TED talk "every kid needs a champion," consistently as a form of motivation. There has been very little time for extra reading to influence me, but I have found ways of incorporating current and former teachers into my daily life (YouTube, social media, co-workers, my administration, etc.) to fuel my teaching. As Pierson quotes James Comer, "no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship," and George Washington Carver, "all learning is understanding relationships" (TED, 2013). Building relationships with my students has been my biggest accomplishment, and as her TED Talk states "kids don't learn from people they don't like" (TED, 2013). This video has been in constant rotation, as well as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "the danger of the single story" that reminds me of how impressionable and vulnerable we are, especially children, and that it is my responsibility to showcase multiple stories through the books that I read, to the videos I show, to the lessons I teach (TED, 2009).

I have sacrificed a lot this first year of teaching, and have worried about my physical and emotional health in relation to having an internship and being required to fulfill certain tasks for CGU. I have constantly felt as though I am burning the candle at 12 different ends, and that I am

eventually going to break from lack of support. My marriage has experienced some of its lowest lows this academic year, and it feels as though between teaching and school, I have lost a big part of who I am. I reflect on my part A of my ethnography, so well written, so full of hope and full of energy, and I long to be the same person I was when I began this program. I still insist on my teaching philosophy, possibly more so now than I did prior to actually being in the classroom. I have found that a positive learning environment for a child really does come from the top down, not just overall as in from the principal to the student, but from the teacher to the student. If I am having a rough day, things that normally wouldn't bother me, drive me insane. If I am having a great day, I have noticed that my students are having a great day as well. I have had some "aha" moments, as Oprah titles them, where I have felt like "wow, I really got through to that student," or "wow that student is taking their learning to a deeper level," and I have had moments (more of these) where I continue to question if I am the type of teacher that these students need. Am I strict enough? Am I too strict? Are they understanding what I am teaching? Am I teaching too fast? Am I teaching too slow? Am I setting them up for failure? Do they feel an insane amount of pressure from me? Are my expectations too high? How can I be better next year? What can I do differently? These thoughts spiral through my mind when I lay my head down, and I hope that with experience, some of these thoughts and insecurities will be put at ease. I have relied on my group of amazing coworkers and administration to push through this program, and look forward to working with them and providing the same support they have given me, to them next year when I don't have the same obligations outside of work.

My goals as I finish this program and get ready for my second year of teaching are as follows:

1. Find another discipline outside of reading to focus on and master (I am thinking science), next academic year
2. Find ways to allow my students to show me what they know outside of tests in math

3. Find ways to set a more normalized schedule (either arrive to school early, or leave school late, BUT NOT BOTH)
4. Organize my classroom library
5. Organize the information that I have done this year (after deciding what I plan to keep and do again) so that I can find the information easily (digitally)
6. Find videos to show my students that bring real life into everyday lessons
7. Find ways to teach more outside
8. Give myself a little bit of grace

As I come up on the end of my first year of teaching, I recall a quote that I read on December 31, 2018 that states the following: “Look back for a moment. Reflect in peace. Then let this year draw to a close. All parts of the journey are sacred and holy. You’ve learned that by now. Take time to honor this ending—though it’s never really the end. Go to sleep tonight. When you wake up tomorrow a new adventure will begin.” To this I add:

*Remember the words you were told
when this last adventure began, the
words whispered quietly to your heart:
Let the journey unfold. Let it be
magical. The way has been prepared.
People will be expecting you.
Yes, you are being led.*

CONCLUSION

“Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength—in search of my mother’s garden, I found my own” – Alice Walker, In Search of My Mother’s Garden

Over the course of this 18-month multiple-subject credential and master’s program, I have learned more about my own beliefs have found a version of myself that I knew existed, but really hadn’t been fulfilled until I was able to walk into a classroom that I could call my own. I once heard guest a guest teacher come to CGU and speak about finding a place within the academy where there was not a place for her. She stated:

I am neither homeless nor at home in the academy; rather, I am making myself at home. “Making myself at home” is both a state of being and a process in which I am [continuously] engaged. I am doing what I can do to make the place where I find myself feel like a home [for myself and for my students] by acting like [not pretending, but behaving as if] the academy is ours. We’ve been invited in. The situation I often hospitable. But you don’t have to be invited into your own home ().

I referred back to this quote, two years after hearing it, when I finished this ethnography. Through my experience, I was able to provide a voice for ten and eleven year old students whom people assume have never experienced hardship due to the city they live in and the money their parents are perceived to have. This ethnography highlights the importance of a teacher to advocate for their students, and more importantly, illuminates our students ability to advocate for themselves when given the safe and secure environment to do so. It is through my three case study students, as well as the 29 of my other students, that I realized that while teachers make the difference in a student’s lives, it is a power and magic that the students have had within themselves all along.

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APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter to Parents

Dear Families,

Welcome to my classroom and the beginning of the new school year! I am so excited to have you in my class, and to being this very exciting year with all of you! Let me begin by telling you a little about myself **(please also be sure to turn this letter over to see some FAQs about me!)**. I am currently working towards my second master's degree in Education at Claremont Graduate University. I am originally from Diamond Bar, CA, and attended Diamond Bar High School, Cal Poly Pomona for my bachelor's degree in Gender, Ethnic & Multicultural Studies as well as for my first master's degree in multimedia education. I did my student teaching at Condit Elementary School right here in Claremont, and while this is my first-year teaching, this is not my first time working with students. I have had the pleasure of working with young scholars at a non-profit organization that focused on college preparation. Outside of working with your children and going to school, some of my interests include reading, cooking and baking, and finding new and fun places to explore with my husband.

My teaching philosophy is a very integral part of who I am and why I became a teacher. I was blessed with teachers who truly believed that education was the key to changing the world; that their students held the key to unifying the nation/world and that education was the way to bring people from different backgrounds and experiences together to create change. It is my goal to be that type of teacher. I aim to bring an open mind and a positive attitude to my classroom each day, with the belief that I owe it to my students, to their families, and to the overall community to bring a sense of consistency, diligence and warmth to my teaching setting. I believe that teaching is a learning process and that I will learn just as much from colleagues and parents as I will from my individual students. I am in this for the long-haul and believe that each of my students will feel my sense of dedication and effort to learn new strategies, ideas and philosophies to better support their individual needs. It is my job as their teacher to provide an environment where their individual skills and strengths are highlighted, and their challenging moments are met with kindness and support. I aim to provide each student with individual care and attention to complement their learning, and will provide each student with the necessary resources to encourage their individual learning styles, social attributes and emotional growth. I ultimately hope to provide an environment where each student develops a love and passion for learning that will continue to follow them throughout the rest of their academic career.

It is within my classroom that students will learn about people from different backgrounds, and more importantly learn to have compassion, understanding and a willingness to learn about others. As young scholars, my classroom will be one of the first places where they can explore issues of diversity and inclusivity in a safe and exploratory environment that is ready to enable them with the vocabulary, inquisitiveness and curiosity needed to continue to unify and build our country in support of one another. My classroom will be where they stop looking at themselves as students, and begin to see themselves as young scholars, ready to take on the world's challenges, the quantitative and explorative components of math and science, and the new depths of reading and writing, with their unique and creative selves.

I am looking forward to a fun and exciting year with this terrific group of students. Any feedback, comments, suggestions, or questions are welcomed by me as I continue to grow as a teacher. Please do not hesitate to stop in, if you have time, or email me, as I would welcome the opportunity to get to know you along with your child. I look forward to learning as much from your students as I hope they learn from me.

Here's to a great year!

Morgan S. Goodman
mgoodman@cusd.claremont.edu

Appendix B
Classroom 27 Door

Appendix C
Example of daily whiteboard quote

Appendix D

“I’m Kind of a Big Deal” buttons to celebrate students 1,000 day of school

Appendix E
Sabrina's CAASPP Scores (previous academic years)

Test	Taken Date	Grade	Scores
CAASPP ELA Claim 1-Reading			
	05/01/2018	4	: Near Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Below Standard
CAASPP ELA Claim 2-Writing			
	05/01/2018	4	: Near Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Near Standard
CAASPP ELA Claim 3-Listening/Speaking			
	05/01/2018	4	: Below Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Below Standard
CAASPP ELA Claim 4-Research/Inquiry			
	05/01/2018	4	: Near Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Below Standard
CAASPP ELA/Literacy Overall			
	05/01/2018	4	: Standard Not Met : 2408
	05/01/2017	3	: Standard Not Met : 2314
CAASPP Math CI 3-Communicating Reasonin			
	05/01/2018	4	: Below Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Near Standard
CAASPP Math Claim 1-Problem Solving			
	05/01/2018	4	: Below Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Near Standard
CAASPP Math Claim 2-Concepts/Procedures			
	05/01/2018	4	: Near Standard
	05/01/2017	3	: Below Standard

Appendix F

Sabrina's STAR test score and analysis

Grade: 5

School Benchmark - Grade 5

STAR Reading Scores

SS: 373 (Scaled Score)	■ Intervention	Agustina's Scaled Score is based on the difficulty of questions and the number of correct responses.
PR: 10 (Percentile Rank)		Agustina scored greater than 10% of students nationally in the same grade.
GE: 3.4 (Grade Equivalent)		Agustina's test performance is comparable to that of an average third grader after the fourth month of the school year.
IRL: 3.2 (Instructional Reading Level)		Agustina would be best served by instructional materials prepared at the third grade level.

Domain Scores

Literature Key Ideas and Details: 54 Craft and Structure: 54 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 54 Informational Text Key Ideas and Details: 54 Craft and Structure: 43 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 51 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 57 Language Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 54	Domain scores, ranging from 0-100, estimate Agustina's percent of mastery on skills in each domain at a fifth grade level.
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Reading Recommendation

ZPD: 2.8-3.9 (Zone of Proximal Development)	Agustina's ZPD identifies books at the right level to provide optimal reading challenge without frustration. Enter Agustina's ZPD in www.ARBookFind.com to find appropriate books.
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Appendix G
Sabrina's use of drawing on a novel study test

Name: _____ Date: _____

Chapter Summary

Chapters 1 - 3

- If you were to give a title to this section of the book, what would it be?

- What happens in these chapters?
In Chapter 1 it's mostly about a girl named Kit who is on a boat to go to Connecticut. In Chapter 2 is still on the boat and she saves a doll. Chapter 3 she arrived at her aunts and Uncle and they got surprise.
- What is your favorite part of this section of the book?
My favorite part is when she jumps off the boat and rescue the doll but I think the Captain Jump too.
- What new words did you learn in these chapters?
In these chapters the new words that I learn was all off my vocabulary, and thier language.
- Draw a picture of something you think represents these chapters.

The Witch of Blackbird Pond 7 © The Book Un

Appendix H
Social Studies Study Guide

Chapter **5** Name Master copy Date _____

Study Guide

DIRECTIONS Fill in the missing information in these paragraphs about the New England colonies. Use the terms below to help you complete the paragraph for each lesson.

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3
charter	barter	exports
consent	common	imports
dissent	Harvard College	industries
expel	public offices	free-market
sedition	town meetings	naval stores

Lesson 1 The king of England gave the Puritans a charter to start the Massachusetts Colony. The Puritan leaders were strict rulers who did not tolerate any dissent, or disagreement. When Anne Hutchinson questioned their teachings, the leaders charged her with sedition. It was common for the leaders to expel people who disagreed with them. Roger Williams was one of those who were forced to leave. He started a new settlement with a government based on the Consent of the settlers.

① Main reason Puritans started the Massachusetts colony?
- religion

② Thomas Hooker - founded Hartford (Connecticut colony)
Anne Hutchinson - lead people to island near Providence
Metacomet - leader of the Wampanog Indians
Roger Williams - founded Providence (Rhode Island Colony)
John Winthrop - early leader of the Massachusetts Colony

CALIFORNIA STANDARDS HSS 5.4, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.5

(continue)

54 ■ Homework and Practice Book Use after reading Chapter 5, pages 206-2

Appendix I

Felix's STAR scores

Grade: 5

School Benchmark - Grade 5

■ Urgent Intervention
 ■ Intervention
 ■ On Watch
 ■ At/Above Benchmark

STAR Reading Scores

SS: 1016 (Scaled Score)	■ At/Above Benchmark	William's Scaled Score is based on the difficulty of questions and the number of correct responses.
PR: 91 (Percentile Rank)		William scored greater than 91% of students nationally in the same grade.
GE: 9.1 (Grade Equivalent)		William's test performance is better than that of an average ninth grader after the first month of the school year.
IRL: 9.0 (Instructional Reading Level)		William would be best served by instructional materials prepared at the ninth grade level.

Domain Scores**Literature**

Key Ideas and Details: 98
 Craft and Structure: 98
 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 98

Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details: 98
 Craft and Structure: 96
 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 98
 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 99

Language

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 97

Domain scores, ranging from 0-100, estimate William's percent of mastery on skills in each domain at a fifth grade level.

Reading Recommendation

ZPD: 4.6-9.1 (Zone of Proximal Development)

William's ZPD identifies books at the right level to provide optimal reading challenge without frustration. Enter William's

Appendix J
Felix's Canvas Quiz Response

Question 2

-- / 5 pts

What is your prediction for The Witch of Blackbird Pond?
Why is this your prediction? What did you base your prediction on? (this needs to be at least a paragraph)

Your Answer:

I think when people assume that Hannah is a witch, Kit will continue to stand beside her friend until the colonists believe that Kit is a witch. But, I do not expect Kit or Hannah to die in the process. I think that after a lot of debating with the colonists they will admit that neither Hannah or Kit are witch's. I predict this because on the back cover it says that Kit will have a hard decision to either leave her friend or risk everything and stand by her side. So, to keep things exciting Kit will probably stay with Hannah and risk being accused of a witch herself.

Additional Comments:

Appendix K
Example of daily PowerPoint for Felix's accommodations

Happy Friday!

Friday, April 19, 2019

Agenda Timer

1. Place your homework on your desk
2. Place your homework folder in your mailbox
3. If you have any money or digital citizenship contracts or envelopes please bring to me
4. Copy today's agenda into your agenda

Today's Bell Ringer:
Please begin working on the chapter 9 practice test in your math book 😊

Appendix L
Sample of assignment instructions written out

Mrs. Goodman's 5th Grade Class

State Float Research Project
2018-2019 Academic Year

For this project, each student will become an expert on one of the 50 states. Students will conduct thorough "A to Z" research about their assigned state, where each letter of the alphabet correlates with a different topic. For example, E is for Economy, G is for Government, and so on. Students will record their notes for each topic in the A to Z state float notes packet. They will then take the research that they have gathered about their respective state and create a "float" and "report" in the iPad app Book Creator. Further details, examples (of state floats) and rubrics for both the state float and for the book creator assignment are in the attached packet.

Each student will be expected to:

- Complete A to Z Packet on individual state
- Make a creative and original float about their state
- Design an online book about their state that includes images, text, music, and/or videos.

You have been assigned the state of: _____

- **A-M (of the A-Z packet) check for completion: Thursday, January 31, 2019**
- **N-Z (of the A-Z packet) check for completion: Thursday, February 14, 2019**
- **Final Projects (float & book on Book Creator) due: Thursday February 28, 2019**

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Academic Content Standards:

CA History-Social Science Standards:

5.9 Students know the location of the current 50 states and the names of their capitals.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7

Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.5

Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or theme

Appendix M
Sample of Blake's Science work

Mystery Science: Lesson 1 (Web of Life) Carter #20

Activity 1: Why would a hawk move to New York City?

1. What are the birds that Doug starts the mystery talking about?
The birds that Doug is talking about are pigeons.

2. What is the name of the bird that scared off the pigeons?
It was a Red Tailed Hawk.

3. What are the clues that helped Doug look at why the pigeons were being scared off? (hint, there are 2 clues)
Number 1 is that it is really hard to scare away pigeons and Number 2 is that they are only really scared of their predators that are falcons and Hawks.

4. What is a predator?
An animal that hunts and eats smaller animals.

5. What does the hawk need to be a successful predator...
In the wild:
• perches high places to build nests (cliffs)
• prey (smaller birds)
In New York City:
• uses skyscrapers to build nests
• eats pigeons

6. What are the food chain questions?
What does it eat?
What's it eaten by?

7. Which living things should you be able to find near you, next time you spot a squirrel? (Ask the questions: 1) what does it eat? 2) what is it eaten by?)
1) acorns and leaves from trees
2) birds of prey and cats

8. What is a food chain? What does a squirrel eat? What is a squirrel eaten by? What is the food chain for the squirrel that Doug uses as an example?
eats squirrels

Scientists always take notes about what they are seeing and noticing, please use this box for any extra notes you may have during this activity:

Appendix N
Text message from Blake's mom Jocelyn

Appendix O
Writing Sample from Blake

Date: _____

Chapter Summary

Chapters 1 - 3

1. If you were to give a title to this section of the book, what would it be?

If I could give a title to this section of the book, it would be called, "The Arrival."

2. What happens in these chapters?

In these chapters, Kit was sailing on a ship called the Dolphin from Barbados to Connecticut because her Grandfather passed and the only family she nows of are her aunt and uncle that live in Connecticut. When she arrives she meets her aunt, uncle, and 2 cousins and brings 7 suit cases just to announce she is there to stay.

3. What is your favorite part of this section of the book?

My favorite part of this section is when Kit rescues the doll because it shows how willing and brave she is to risk her life and make someone's day.

4. What new words did you learn in these chapters?

The three new words I learned were brigantine, a sailing ship, burnished, polished by rubbing, and wistful which means to feel or show a regretful longing for something.

5. Draw a picture of something you think represents these chapters.

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