Sudarshan Srirangapatanam

February 12, 2016

**First Field Visit (2.12.16) (Note 1)**

**Meta-Data**

* Place: Our Lady of the Rosary, Union City
* Date and Time: Wednesday, February 10, 2012 from 3:00PM to 6:00PM (after school)
* Interactions: Ms. America (Teacher), Jaden (6th Grade boy), Alejandra (8th Grade girl), Casandra (8th Grade girl), Monica (8th Grade girl), People form Berkeley Diocese, California Dept. of Education and Alameda Dept. of Education
* Activities: Homework time, Relay Race, and end of the day snack time.
* Ideas to focus on: Initial Observation and getting to know students

**Part 1: Setting, Your Role, School and Community**

To visit the site, I drive a car from Union City BART station. While driving, I noticed a nearby public school and as I entered the community Church was a highlight. Passing through the neighborhood I saw houses using parallel parking more than their garage parking, and some garages were open. They revealed a bunch of construction items. The cars that were parked were mostly trucks and compact sedans. These automobiles had different patches of color on their body and some of them were totaled. As I turned around the corner I encountered a board indicating that it was “Our Lady of the Rosary School”. As I entered the building’s main entrance I noticed a small garden like area which had only two plants. The main entrance itself was locked, and since it was out of ordinary I walked around the border of the school in an attempt to find another entrance. After a couple of minutes, I walked to a fence and asked a teacher (Ms. America) to guide me inside and told her that I wanted to talk to my supervisor on-site (Jamie). She unlocked the main entrance and I entered into an office which was essentially a modified single family home. To my right was a small office which belonged to the secretary of the school and to my left was an office room with office supplied including printer and a small bed.

Hanging on the wall right on top of the bench across Secretary’s room was pictures of Pope Francis and two other father. On the other side of the wall were wooden blocks which contained engraved names. Right on top of the frame of the board was a crucifix. I was then introduced to Jamie, and she told that she completely forgot that she was supposed to meet me today. She then took me to her office which was not locked and had a big server right behind her desk. This room was really hot [in terms of temperature] and had a lot of paper, baskets, sports utilities, and snacks buried inside. I was then given a stack of paper which was assembled in front of me. After completing the paperwork, I was introduced formally to Ms. America, who was standing in the parking lot. The walk from Jamie’s office to the parking lot was through a trailer corridor, this corridor gave rise to couple more rooms. And the walls of this corridor was decorated with photos of previous graduates [class of 1997, class of 2012 and many more]. The parking lot had slanted parking spaces, they were neither the parallel nor the traditional straight spaces. The teacher along with the students was ready to go to a class to finish their homework, but they were holding a basketball. Both teachers were making fun of Alex who was sweating a lot.

I was then introduced to my task, which was to simply help them with their homework and to assist Ms. America with Relay Race. People from Berkeley Diocese, and California & Alameda Dept. of education were talking to students and Jamie and other teachers were worried that they were present without any concrete notification. Ms. America along with her students went to a nearby fence and lined up the students and told them to behave in front of these people. They were all taken to a trailer home nearby which was said to be a classroom. This particular classroom was one of its kinds, in the sense that it was a single classroom with no adjacent rooms or buildings. We had to climb up three steps to get inside the classroom. From the inside the classroom was chaotic, the desks were in no particular order and was placed randomly. The chairs were similarly arranged. Whiteboards were on the other end of the classroom, and to the left of the room was a line of computers. To the right were a bunch of posters on the wall and closet with students’ name stapled to the top of the spaces. The room was filled with students’ talk.

The classroom had a crucifix near an emergency exit that was located to the left side of the room. As the students were situated in their seats, Ms. America warned them to be on their best behavior since other people are present on campus, and they were also told if not they would be sent to “kinder” implying kindergarten area of the school. Some of the students, mainly Alex, Joshua and Rudy, occupied computer area and told that they didn’t have any homework. And others were asked to sit at their desks. Jaden, a short skinny 6th or 7th grader took a chair by himself and sat all the way to the right of the class with no students around him. Alejandra, Cassandra, and Alexi sat in a group which Monica and one other girl sat together. Ms. America along with Gio, Arturo and two other sat in the middle of the room.

Ms. America told me to stay around and see if anyone needs help and instructed me to help them if they need. She also told me that I could approach anyone and ask them if they need help if I felt like they need help. Ms. America then asked if anyone needed help and Alejandra raised her hand, I then walked over to her to help her out. I first asked her name and then introduced myself, I then asked her which subject she was working on, and she replied “math”. I help her with her math problem and offered to help on anything else she has questions with and she refused the help. I told her that I would be around if she needed help in future and she said “OK”. The whole conversation from Alejandra’s side was straight to the point and she barely looked at me. I walked around the class for a while.

I then walked to Jaden who was sitting alone and offered help and said he was fine, and I told him I could help him with anything if he needed it and he replied “OK”. He continued to talk saying, “By the way this is the voice I use to make jokes, and this is my sarcastic voice”. I was then confused on the topic of whether he needed help, he continued saying, “This is my serious voice.” In a robotic tone, and asked me for my pen which I then exchanged for his small pencil. People for the diocese then entered the classroom, all students showed an instant change as they entered, and all of the extra noise from giggles, computer, and other talking was instantly gone. They took a picture of the classroom and talked to me about logistics of the EDUC140 and I answered them. After they left the noise returned, Rudy was throwing stress ball in an apple shape at Monica. Alex, Arturo, and Joshua started playing games at the computer and Jaden still remained silent. Despite, all these noises Alejandra and her team continued to work and showed interest in completing their work.

Monica then raised her hand up in the air and asked for help. I was relieved to finally help someone. Everyone refused to talk to me except Ms. America, I went over to Monica and sat across her. I asked her to show me how she would solve that problem and told her I would correct her mistakes if I encountered any. And together we solved the problem and found the value of X to be -50. After an hour of homework time, we went to Jamie’s room to gather a jumping rope, football, and basketball in preparation for a relay race. Students were talking in the corridor and didn’t stop upon warning by Ms. America and, therefore, they were instructed to face the wall until they could all understand to follow rules. After completion, they were taken to the parking lot to complete their relay race, and as cars filled up space, we were moved to the grass area. The lawn area was wet and made it impossible for running activities and the game began with people passing a basketball back and forth and adding a mix of jump rope.

Throughout the time, students were not in a single group. I was assisting Ms. America to decide who won the race and it was girls. Boys were fast in passing ball session of the race but failed to finish jump rope as quickly as girls. After the race, Alex and Joshua spiraled football at each other and at around 5:45 PM they were all asked to report to 5th grade for snacks. Each student grabbed a MacBook and played games on them during this time and parents came in and signed a sheet to get their kids.

**Part 2: Focused Observation**

During this whole time, there was one interesting act by Jaden at the site. At around 4:30 PM everyone was asked to pack their stuff and it was time for the relay race. As all students got excited, there was one who didn’t seem a bit happy about the event. He asked Ms. America why they would have to play if they had homework to do. And Ms. America didn’t answer him. During out time in the parking lot, he continued to ask the same question and the only answer he got was “because after school is not about doing homework” and he wasn’t satisfied with the answer. While talking to his colleagues, he said he couldn’t play because he doesn’t know how to. Gio then instructed him of what he had to do and asked him to be in the front of the line so that he doesn’t have to do much.

Upon moving to lawn area, he was hurt but refused to tell who hit him. I suspected Rudy since he talked rudely to him earlier, but as far as I can remember it wasn’t anything threatening, it was simply a dry insult. He was hit with a ball and his ears turned red, he was then sent with Gio to grab an icepack and the redness eventually disappeared. As a result of this, however, he didn’t play with the rest of the troupe. He played by himself with Jump rope for a while and Ms. America confiscated it from him and told him he couldn’t have it since he told her that he would hurt himself using it. This conversation between Jaden and Ms. America continued for a while and I just observed this conversation.

During Jaden’s check out there was another important addition to the information we know about him. He seems to be very scared of his dad and said, “my dad doesn’t like me doing …” additionally, his brother from different class whom I didn’t observe much showed a similar kind of behavior around his dad but not as drastic as Jaden did.

**Part 3: Reflection**

Since this was my first visit to the site, most of my views were very broad and very general. After observing the kids, my middle school memories were refreshed and those memories helped me generalize some of the aspects I saw on-site. I generalized Alex as attraction seeking guy for his nature of being around someone at all times. The site overall is very unusual since it doesn’t have a traditional school setting. One of the greatest challenges for me is going to get used to being an observer than a participant in this study. Since observe requires me to take notes while I’m participating, I am worried about being a complete participant. One important thing to note here is that the time I spend at the site is after school and, therefore, allows me to engage more with select students.