

Brian Colton

Teacher Candidate Work Sample – Part 1

School Demographics And Culture

The Wheatley School in Anderson, Rhode Island is an inner-city Elementary School.

The school consists of grades 2-5. The school shares a building space with a pre-school/kindergarten/first-grade (Willets Road School), and students move from the early childhood school to The Wheatley School.

The Wheatley School received a 1-Star rating on the 2017-2018 Report Card from the Rhode Island Department of Education. “A 1-Star rating indicates the lowest performance in terms of achievement and growth or graduation.” (Rhode Island Department of Education Report Card) The school has 542 students and 44 educators in three grades. The demographic base of the students is primarily Hispanic (close to 65%) and black or African-American (close to 17%). The remaining 18% of students are mixed (in order) as: two or more races, Asian, white and American Indian or Alaska Native. The gender of the student population leans male (53.5% to 46.5%). (Rhode Island Department of Education Report Card)

The students at The Wheatley School are economically disadvantaged at a rate of 92% of the student body. All students at The Wheatley School are provided breakfast (in the classrooms) and lunch, free of charge. 2016-2017 per pupil expenditures for The Wheatley School were \$11,637 per student. Those expenditures for the city were \$17,043, a difference of \$5,406. The average expenditures per pupil for the state were

\$16,660, which was over \$5,000 less than those students at The Wheatley School.

(Rhode Island Department of Education Report Card)

The staff at The Wheatley School consists of 2 building administrators (Principal and Assistant Principal), 3 support professionals and 39 teachers. The teachers are primarily white (69%) and primarily female (90%). (Rhode Island Department of Education Report Card)

Student chronic absenteeism is an issue at The Wheatley School with 27.8% of the students being absent 10% of days or more. That number ends up being 18 or more days over a full school year. (Rhode Island Department of Education Report Card)

Suspensions are not as much of an issue at The Wheatley School, with out-of-school suspension being used 5.5 times per 100 students. The number of suspensions could be lower, but the 5.5 falls just above the <5.0 number that would have given the school the maximum of 3 points available on the RIDE School Report Card.

Description of Learners (Equity/Assessment)

The Wheatley School is currently in a pilot program, for English-Language Arts (ELA), with the American Reading Company (ARC). The second and fourth grades are using the system for evaluating students and setting forth curriculum while focusing on the student's areas of need. The groups listed below are abbreviations for colors. The groups all have a grade level attached to them. Here are the colors and grade levels applicable: **2G** (2 Green – first third of first grade), **1B** (1 Blue – second third of first grade), **2B** (2 Blue – final third of first grade), **1R** (1 Red – first half of second grade), **2R** (2 Red – second half of second grade), **Wt** (White – third grade), **Bk** (Black – fourth

grade) and **Or** (Orange – fifth grade). In Ms. Smith’s class, the students know that there are different levels that are named after different fruits (Bananas, Blueberries, Raspberries, Rhubarb, Kiwi, etc.) but there is never a stigma attached to them. They are working together in groups of their peers on ELA areas of need that they may have. The students are given assignments from Ms. Smith to do on their own during “small group” time. Then every few days, they meet with Ms. Smith to go over some of the work they did independently to see where their progress is.

Below are some notes on all twenty students in the class. Initials are used to represent the student, followed by their color group, learner factors and additional comments about the student. The additional comments come from SchoolPace (the online component of the ARC program), comments from Ms. Smith, parent-teacher conferences and personal assessments.

Student	Group	Critical Learner Factors	Comments
AC	2B	N/A	AC reads with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. He vocalizes while reading. He will use his finger to guide reading and sometimes to decipher unfamiliar words. He can decode two-syllable words following basic patterns.

JE	2B	Accommodations in IEP for reading goals. Small group time in classroom with reading specialist.	JE is challenged in his engagement. Lacks desire to read. When reading, JE is able to decode two-syllable words following a basic pattern. He vocalizes when reading and has a tendency to read by lines, not with punctuation. Has difficulty with comprehension.
JFR	Bk	N/A	JR comes from a Spanish-speaking household. He enjoys reading chapter books that are part of a series. He has a sufficient vocabulary to support his level of reading. He is able to draw inferences from the text he is reading while explaining the text.
AG-G	2R	N/A	AG has a strong intrinsic motivation to do well in all subjects in school. He is a hard worker that has made improvement by putting in the effort. He is able to sit and read a long picture book. He is able to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
JH	2R	Accommodations in IEP for reading and speech. Leaves classroom for work with	There are attendance concerns with JH. He has missed a lot of classroom time this year between absences and being taken out of class to meet with specialists. He is able to read a chapter

		speech therapist and stays in classroom for work with reading specialist.	book. He is able to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. Has the ability to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
KJ	Or	N/A	KJ has moved up a reading level in half of an academic year. He still remains a reluctant reader, but he strives to do well. He is able to quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. The goal is to increase comprehension of the text he is reading, while also getting him “hooked” on a chapter book series.
IJ	2B	N/A	IJ’s “power goal” is to be able to chunk two-syllable words. She is able to read picture books. She is able to read proper punctuation. She vocalizes while reading and usually points to the word she is reading at the time.

YL	1B	N/A	YL is able to decode regularly spelled one-syllable words. Her “power goal” is to be able to chunk to decode words. She vocalizes while reading and has a tendency to follow the word with her finger.
KM	1R	N/A	KM is able to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. She is able to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. She is able to read picture books.
JM-C	1R	N/A	JM-C is able to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. She is able to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. She is reading chapter books that contain pictures.
NP	2R	First year in a regular education classroom. Previously in bilingual	NP is quiet, but works hard to do well in school. She is able to sit and read a chapter book with pictures. She is able to ask and answer such

		classrooms.	questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
RP	2R	N/A	RP struggles with focus at times. When he doesn't know the answer to something, RP has a tendency to get stuck and to not move on. He is able to decode two-syllable words. He is able to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
JP	2R	N/A	JP is social and has a tendency to get off-track during small group time. He has the ability to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. He is able to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. Has difficulty drawing inferences. JP is literal in his understanding of text.
MRC	Bk	N/A	MRC is a voracious reader that has a robust word schema. She is able to refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly. She has some difficulty drawing inferences from the text. She will read almost

			anything put in front of her.
XR	1B	Accommodations in IEP for speech and occupational therapy goals. Being tested for other IEP accommodations.	XR is able to decode regularly spelled one-syllable words. His “power goal” is to be able to chunk to decode words. He has difficulty staying focused while reading.
GR	1R	N/A	GR gets distracted easily. She is very social and has difficulty staying focused while doing group work. She is able to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. She is able to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. She is reading chapter books that contain pictures.
AR	2G	Accommodations in IEP for reading goals. Stays in classroom for work with reading specialist.	AR is able to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. He asks and answers questions about key details in a text. He knows the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs. His “power goal” is to use initial blends and digraphs.

IR	2R	N/A	<p>IR is new to the school. She originally tested in 1R, but it became clear, in working with her, that she may be at the incorrect reading level.</p> <p>Following additional analysis and testing, it was determined that she should be in the 2R group.</p> <p>She has the ability to read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. She is able to ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. She read a chapter book with illustrations and pictures and was able to discuss specifics of content and motivation.</p>
KT	Wt	N/A	<p>KT has a strong use of vocabulary conversationally, but it does not always translate to the written word. She is able to decode multi-syllable words. She can ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.</p>
M-VL	Or	N/A	<p>MV-L is reading at a fifth grade level. Her vocabulary and ability to decipher challenging words is above grade level. She is able to quote</p>

			accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. MV-L needs to focus on comprehension and meaning in the text she reads.
--	--	--	---

Policy Environment

Attendance is a problem at The Wheatley School. At the start of the school year, when there was a bussing strike, there were a number of students that had no way to get to school, so attendance was down. Since the bussing strike was cleared up though, attendance is still an issue. It is not unusual for a student to be out of class for three days in a row without a doctor’s note or any signs of illness. When prompted with a simple statement of, “We missed you yesterday,” students will respond with answers such as, “I had a tough time waking up, so my Mom had me stay home,” or “I was really tired.”

The policy for attendance is that there is an Attendance Team, made up of the Principal, Assistant Principal, School Psychologist and Social Worker, that meets every week to two weeks. They make calls to student’s parents/guardians when teachers notice a pattern of absence. Five tardy slips also equal an absence. It ultimately speaks to a pattern that is interfering with the student’s learning.

When a student is absent for five days in a row, the teacher fills out an A8 form. There is a call that is made to the student's home, and then there is a home visit made to check on the wellness of the students.

The Wheatley School has tried numerous times to create incentives for the students to have perfect attendance. There used to be "attendance clubs" where they would give away t-shirts for perfect attendance. They have given away a bike in a raffle (for perfect attendance). None of the incentives change the fact that students that make it a point to be at school are there. Those that can't or don't want to get to school regularly, do not. Attendance issues work their way into everything at the school both with students and teachers (The Wheatley School received 1-point out of 3 with 27.8% of students chronically absent and 1-point out of 3 for teacher absenteeism with 27.4% missing 18 days or more). Due to the shortage of substitutes in Anderson, many times when A teacher is out for the day; the students are split into groups of four or five students and sent to other classrooms. They spend the day following the students in the class to specials and lunch, but during classroom instruction, independent and small group work, the students are in front of Chrome Books, doing work assigned to them by the teacher. They typically do not join in the work with the students in the classroom where they are assigned for the day.

When students are absent, they fall behind on work with the classroom teacher and the specialists they are assigned to. Most of the students in a given classroom are trying to catch up in general, so missing two or three days in a week is a battle for the student. There is no set policy for students arriving in the middle of the school year. I witnessed this first hand with IR. IR moved from New York. Administration called to the room to

notify that a new student would be joining the class. The student came up to the class and was introduced to everyone. It is then the classroom teacher's responsibility to incorporate the student into the class. In Ms. Smith's classroom, this was done by pairing another student, KT, with IR to help show her what is happening in the classroom. This worked as KT is a caring and helpful student that went out of her way to form a friendship with IR. IR is also a quiet student that pays attention and follows rules. Even with the proper match, it still took a good two weeks for IR to start to feel like she was part of the class. There were a lot of questions about classroom rules and procedures. There were a number of diagnostic tests, for mostly math and ELA, to determine the correct small groups in which to place IR. In the end, it has seemingly worked out, but there should probably be a procedure in place, from an administrative standpoint to assist in the transition.

Ms. Smith spoke with me about the policy on communication with parents. There is not a set policy in place. She spoke of how the teachers are asked to keep communication logs, but no one checks on them. Ms. Smith said that ultimately it is the teacher's responsibility to build relationships with the families. Relationships are built through communication home to students' families, phone calls and in some cases, emails. This year was difficult as the staff was "work-to-rule" for the beginning part of the school year as there was a contract dispute. During work-to-rule, the staff works the required hours and nothing else. Therefore, there was no open house. No parent-teacher conferences. In many cases, the first opportunity that Ms. Smith had to meet student's parents, was at the last round of parent-teacher conference which took place in early February. Work-to-rule made it very difficult for the staff as teachers do not "punch

clocks". They are forever working. Work-to-rule makes it impossible for teachers to build proper relationships with families.

Most documents that are sent home to families are sent in both English and Spanish due to the very large Hispanic population in the school. When conferences, such as the last round of parent-teacher conferences come up, the families are given the option to have a translator present (Ms. Smith does not speak Spanish). There are a number of members of staff that do speak Spanish fluently, so there is never a problem getting a translator, it just becomes a tricky scheduling issue. If the family needs a translator that speaks a language other than Spanish, the school department will provide one to the school.

The Wheatley School has a number of safety procedures in place for the health and welfare of the students. All of the doors are locked at all times. Teachers have key tags to get into any outside door in the school. Any visitors have to be buzzed in through the main entrance, sign a log and walk the halls with a visitor tag. The dismissal, for any students that are not bussed, is done outdoors to limit the number of people potentially coming into the school.

All of the students are given tags that they wear at the end of the day. This is specifically for bus students as they are checked into a list, by a teacher, when entering the gym (where bus students congregate). They will then, when their bus is called, give their tag to the teacher bringing them to the bus. The teacher is then to count all of the students (as they enter the bus) and all of the tags, to make sure that numbers match. This is a helpful procedure, but I see a number of teachers collecting tags before they should (it should be done as they enter the bus) and a number of students walking

around without tags (they get lost sometimes and not replaced). I was told by Ms. Smith (who coordinates all of the busses as they arrive), that the student's bus tags are helpful in keeping track of where the students are. She specifically told me about an incident in which a student that had taken the bus, but got off a stop early to go to his friends' house. The school was able to see the list and the tag (as confirmation that he was on the bus) when the worried parent called.

The school is in the process of implementing a "No Bully" policy. It is a new program this year, and they are still in the process of training (with an outside organization) on it. Currently, when bullying occurs, the teachers identify the problem and consult with administration. Many times, the teachers and/or administration will attempt a "restorative circle." "A Restorative Circle is a community process for supporting those in conflict. It brings together the three parties to a conflict – those who have acted, those directly impacted and the wider community – within an intentional systemic context, to dialogue as equals. Participants invite each other and attend voluntarily. The dialogue process used is shared openly with all participants, and guided by a community member. The process ends when actions have been found that bring mutual benefit." (www.restorativecircles.org).

I witnessed a restorative circle at work with a bullying event that had taken place on the playground between a number of girls. Ms. Smith took the parties involved into the hall. They all had chairs and they all sat in a circle. Ms. Smith facilitated the discussion and got the two girls involved (the bully and the victim), to a point where they sat on a rug in the classroom (by themselves) to speak and apologize directly to each other. The circle seemed to have worked, especially short term, as there have been no incidents since.

The Wheatley School will be posting a new position (for the 2019-2020 school year) for a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) coach, with the hope that the coach will be more involved in creating policies and procedures along these lines.

Substance abuse, with students, is not an issue with the school population as the students are in second to fifth grade. There is a zero tolerance policy in regards to drugs and alcohol, but in the eighteen years that Ms. Smith has been in her classroom, she has not seen any evidence of such.

There is also a zero tolerance policy for weapons in the school. From what I have been told from Ms. Smith, it really depends on the student, intent, weapon and administrator. One student threatening another student with a butter knife is going to be treated differently than a student coming into school with a water gun.

As for the searching of lockers: teachers are not allowed to search without permission of the student. Often, in this fourth grade, Ms. Smith will ask a student to check their bag or locker for something and they will do it while she is looking over their shoulder. If there is suspicion of something dangerous or illegal in a locker, that search would have to be done by administration.

There are regular fire drills done at The Wheatley School in which all students file out of the school, quietly, in an orderly fashion, to the playground. The school population stands in their designated spots until they are given an all-clear signal from administration.

Lock down/active shooter drills are also done at The Wheatley School. The teachers are given a choice of “shelter & place” (in which they stay locked in the classroom) or “run & hide” (in which they flee the classroom to leave the school). They are told that

there have been no instances in the United States of injuries sustained in locked classrooms during active shooter incidents. The preference of the administration seems to be “shelter & place”, but the teachers are given an option. All of the windows on the doors of the classrooms are covered and all the doors can be locked.

Most of the disciplinary work at The Wheatley School is handled within the classroom. Disciplinary work becomes a part of every-day classroom management. In Ms. Smith’s class, the classroom management begins with the first six weeks of school. Those first six weeks are used to build a classroom community with rules established by the students (through teacher guidance). I have witnessed instances in which students, that had become a distraction to the class or were being disrespectful, were taken out of the class to have a one-on-one discussion with the teacher. In Ms. Smith’s classroom, there are three tables in the back of the room for students to move to if they are having a tough time getting along with others, or are distracted in their work. Some of the other five classrooms in the fourth grade will regularly send their students to another class (many times Ms. Smith’s) for a break or a “time-out”, if it is deemed necessary. The teachers will send them with work to complete as to make the time out of the classroom as productive as possible.

In severe instances of disciplinary actions, there is a crisis team at the school. They will deal with issues that arise of unsafe behavior, students leaving classrooms, violence towards others, etc. Expulsions are rare at The Wheatley School, but teachers will regularly write up students in Skyward (their online attendance, grading and behavior tracking system) for behaviors such as fights and dangerous behavior (such as rock throwing on the playground). Out-of-school suspensions are limited, as they have been

proven to not have a positive impact on a student's education. I believe a secondary reason for reluctance with out-of-school suspension is that they negatively affect the school's rating with RIDE. In-school suspensions happen more regularly, as was the case recently with two students who skipped school for half a day in the basement bathroom. In-school suspensions are still not frequent in their occurrences.

All students at The Wheatley School receive free breakfast and lunch in school. The only negative reaction I heard about it is that Ms. Smith does not necessarily agree with the choice of breakfast. She believes the breakfast choices are high in sugar and carbs and not the healthiest options for the students. The breakfast, while eaten in the classroom, has a tendency to get a little messy. The teachers seem to all agree that breakfast and lunch being paid for by the school is a good thing, as in this low-income community it is important for students to be fed properly.

Students are not allowed to bring outside food & beverages into the classroom for the class (celebrations, bake sales, etc.). Teachers can however bring in food for the whole class. Potential allergies (peanut, etc.) need to be taken into consideration, but teachers can bring in food to create a celebration for the students. Ms. Smith said that when the students collect 15 Wildcats (awards that they receive from other teachers for good behavior), she holds a movie celebration where they watch a movie in class and have popcorn and treats. The students really enjoy the event and it helps celebrate good behavior.

Absences at school for health related issues are supposed to be excused with a doctor's note. In the first few weeks I have been in a classroom there have been over

thirty absences and I have only seen two parent notes. Ms. Smith told me that the ratio we have seen of absences to parent notes is typical for The Wheatley School.

At The Wheatley School, the only opt-out that parents/guardians have is for specific standardized testing. There are no conversations about sexual health in health class, so that is not something where an opt-out is necessary.

Teachers are allowed two days of professional development per year and they are encouraged to use them. Teachers must fill out a form that is submitted to the Superintendent's office in advance of the professional development activity. Once it is approved by the Superintendent's office, the teacher is allowed to attend the event.

Teachers are given fifteen sick days a year. During the first three years, seven of the days are "banked" for probationary purposes. Sick days carry over from year to year and teachers can accumulate up to one hundred fifty sick days. The reason for the ability to bank a high number of sick days in Anderson, RI is that the teachers do not have any Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI). So if a teacher goes out for a long-term illness or maternity leave, they need to have a bank of days to cover their potential lost wages. If a teacher is out for more than four consecutive days with an illness, they are required to get a doctor's note; otherwise they cannot collect wages for their time out.

As for disability accommodations at The Wheatley School, most of them fall under Individualized Education Programs (IEP). There are IEP meetings happening with the district Special Education department on a weekly basis. In some cases, as with XR, a student will have an IEP for speech that will phase out come fourth grade. In instances such as with XR, where there are additional issues impeding growth in learning, the teacher and specialists will recommend additional testing. Additional testing has

occurred for XR, but his mother has not responded to requests for follow-up to determine direction for the IEP.

There are some 504 plans in place at The Wheatley School, but the majority of accommodations are made based upon IEP's. At The Wheatley School, teacher aides (TA) are in all special education and inclusion classrooms. Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) are placed in classrooms that contain students with that have severe physical disabilities. IEP's, as a whole, contain specific accommodations, but ultimately it is the classroom teacher's responsibility to make sure that students with IEP's are getting the accommodations they need to succeed.

Students at The Wheatley School very rarely have an opportunity to go on field trips. Field trips usually occur around two times per year due to lack of funding. The lack of field trips is partially due to the income-level in the community and partially due to lack of additional financial support from the PTO. Unfortunately, the opportunities just aren't there in this school community for outside learnings through field trips.

There is a Chrome Book for every student at The Wheatley School. The computers are kept in charging bays that are locked every night. The students take the computers out to do blended learning activities on iReady and Prodigy Math. The computers in the classrooms are charged and locked nightly. In Ms. Smith's class of twenty students, there are twenty-six Chrome Books.

The stock room at The Wheatley School is fully stocked with the basics for teachers; paper, crayons, pencils, etc. All other supplies in the classroom are supplied by the teacher. With teachers having to fill in the gaps on classroom supplies, this seemingly puts a heavy financial burden on teachers (especially in their first few years).

The curriculum at The Wheatley School is decided on and purchased by the school administration. The school has Vendor Fairs once a year where everyone has an opportunity to look at and discuss any new curriculum for the school. The school is currently piloting ARC in second and fourth grades, with the expectation being that it will expand to the other grades in 2019-2020.

There is a yearbook in The Wheatley School coordinated by a fourth grade teacher. There is a celebration for fifth graders that are moving onto the middle school. They have a “Clap Out” in which all the classes in the whole school line up outside their classroom. The fifth grade students then take a “victory lap” through every floor of the school. Each class cheers for the fifth graders when they pass by their respective classroom. At the end of the Clap Out, the fifth grade students have a reception with family and friends outside the school to celebrate their accomplishment.

Finally, the school doesn't have a policy related to academics and sports as there are a minimal number of Elementary School sports teams. The Wheatley School does however participate in the Anderson Basketball League. The students, mostly fourth and fifth graders, are required by the coach to do their homework, have strong attendance and be kind. There used to be a formal contract for student-athletes, but they no longer have one. The student-athlete behavior is monitored by their classroom teachers.