West Branch and Alliance Middle Schools
October 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21
**Exploratory Curriculum**

*Exploratory Classes* (e.g. Physical Education, Health, Music, Art, Foreign Language, Computers, etc)

An exploratory curriculum should allow students to discover their interests and skills, acquaint them with healthy leisure pursuits, and go in-depth in academic areas of their choice. The purpose of this activity is to experience the exploratory curriculum by observing/participating to the extent possible in one session of two different exploratory classes that your student tour guide is scheduled to attend. (West Branch, Alliance)

For each visit to an exploratory class, complete the following information on this form. A completed typed reflection of your observations for both exploratory classes will be collected on Wednesday - October 26th.

**West Branch Middle School**

Date/time of visit to an exploratory class ___________________________________________

Which exploratory class? _______________________________

What were students doing during this exploratory class? Briefly describe how students spent their time.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What did you do during this time? (Participate? Observe? Talk to students? Other?) If

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What were students encouraged to explore in this course?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
In what ways might you incorporate this exploratory curriculum into your concentrations, for integrating curriculum? (think of the skills, content, attitudes that students learn)


What have you learned about students while observing this class? (how students learn, relate to one another and the teacher)


How did your student tour guide participate in this exploratory? Was there a difference in behavior from other classes that you observed? (motivation, participation, focus)


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Classroom Study –West Branch Middle School

Classrooms differ from each other in subtle ways because of the hidden norms that develop between teachers and students that govern roles, relationships, and responsibilities. As you attend classes at West Branch and Alliance try to understand what the formal and informal rules are that give order to the classroom. What roles do the students and teachers play? The challenge is to figure out how they experience and give meaning to their classrooms.

Through observations of student/teacher communication, activities and tasks, and looking at student and teacher artifacts and documents, try to address the following questions that will help you describe how the classroom environment is understood and created by students and teachers. Also, think about what you have learned about adolescents from Elkind, *Educating Esme*, and class discussions and see if you observe behaviors that support these theories and beliefs.

As you observe at both schools, take notes on the various observations that you see. Make sure that you label the annotations with the name of the school where you are observing.

Questions to guide your observations, and examination of student/teacher work

What are some of the formal and informal rules, the norms that give order to the classroom?

Cite three examples of observed discipline interaction.

How do the students and teachers experience the classroom? (For example, do they experience it as a place of freedom or restraint? A place where they socialize? Have fun? Engage in learning activities)

What examples of “Identity, Connectedness, and Power” do you observe?
Can you recognize any obvious examples of stressors (Type A, B, or C) going on with any of the students through their interactions or dialogue? Discuss this briefly.

What examples of “age dynamism” or the “niche market” do you see among the students?

Are there any unique intervention strategies being used in the classroom that address the particular needs of middle school students?

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Suggested Interview Questions
West Branch Middle School Alliance, Ohio

Interview your student throughout the day, but primarily during lunch. Try to find out as much as you can about your student that would help you to be a better middle school teacher.

1) Assume that a new kid moved next door and would be your new schoolmate. What are three good things about this school that you would tell him/her?

2) What are some things about the school that you would change, if you could? Why?
3) How do you feel, in general, about your teachers?

4) How do you feel, in general, about your classes? Do they challenge you?

5) If you could choose a topic for an interdisciplinary topic to study, what would it be?

6) What are you learning in school that is of value to you now?

7) Do you have opportunities to help make decisions about what goes on in class? In the school?

8) What do you plan to do when you are finished with high school?
9) What are some of the school/classroom rules (written or unwritten) that bother you? How do you handle situations that arise with these rules?

10) If you are on an academic team, what are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

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