Ethnography Observations  
Noble Academy Charter School  
October 7th, 2015 12:30-4pm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand new big, brick school on a large piece of land. A lot of empty space</th>
<th>Must feel different for kids coming from urban setting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk in through front doors and the cafeteria is straight ahead. A lot of big windows and the ceiling is high</td>
<td>School had a calming feel to it because it isn’t filled to its student capacity.</td>
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<td>Staircases on both sides leading to upstairs classroom</td>
<td>-The natural light that fills the cafeteria and classroom makes me feel calm. It goes along with the openness on the outside of the school as well</td>
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<td>In the classroom there is a big floor to ceiling window on right wall. Covers ¼ of wall starting from back left corner of wall</td>
<td>Brand new school so everything is modern and nice. Must feel different for some kids coming from struggling families</td>
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<td>Lots of natural light in room</td>
<td>-We came after lunch, so that impacted the students’ focus as well</td>
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<td>Curvy shaped modern-looking desks pushed together to form three long rows</td>
<td>Brand new school comes with nice, brand new furniture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smart projector in front of classroom</td>
<td>-Different for kids to have access to a computer right in their classroom for those coming from a struggling Minneapolis school</td>
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<td>We are sitting at a table in the back left hand corner. Kids keeping looking back at us</td>
<td>-Paige and I are the outcasts because we aren’t wearing the uniform or blue shirt, and we are white (along with Thompson)</td>
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<td>⅔ of kids left for specials (today is art)</td>
<td>-Seems to be designed to keep the kids’ attention and be a fun way to learn</td>
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<td>Big gray and white tiles cover floor</td>
<td>-Thompson is very positive and makes the students feel successful. However, the 2R reading group still lacks confidence in their ability to read out loud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern looking gray cabinets and drawers cover wall. Cabinets have skinny white lines for design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computers against entire wall with window and part of back wall to form an L</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 students spread out on computers</td>
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<td>3 students at table near front with Thompson. 2 Hmong, 1 black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most kids wearing blue shirt saying “We love Noble”. Others are wearing black uniform top. All wearing black pants and shoes</td>
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<td>Kids at computer are doing a program called Read Live</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids at table with Thompson are reading out loud. Thompson: “I’ve been listening to you read and I’ve noticed that when you come across a word you don’t know, you stop and sound it out. That will make you a strong reader.”</td>
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-Wall with window has “Genre” written with each letter on its own triangular flag. Under each frame is a picture frame with one genre: nonfiction, poetry, tall tale, drama, horror, fantasy, comedy
-Front of the room in the middle is covered by a large, rectangular light brown rug
-Thompson is now sitting on rug with six students
-These students are apart of the 2R reading group
-Students are going around in a circle reading one sentence out loud
-Thompson: “You must complete one chapter book from the 2R reading bin every week”
-Students read each sentence very slowly and quietly
-Students on computers now are very engaged in Read Live

-Yogi, a black girl, asked Thompson, “Is this homework?” after she explained an assignment
-Classroom is quiet and students seem timid
-Posters with animated boy or girl cover cabinets and cupboards, each with a title: creating, analyzing, evaluating, understanding, applying, remembering
-One Hmong boy (who was in first small group) is sitting at computer by the window with his headset around his neck, looking around aimlessly
-Yogi and Ethel, both black, sitting at computers in the far corner away from everyone else. Only black kids in room
-Yogi has her hair in a tight bun and she seems very uninterested in Read Live
-Thompson now helping boy who had his headset around his neck. He is now engaged with headset on

-Gives the room a comforting feel with art work all around

-Homey feel when students sit on it

-Reading out loud is a scary thing for students to do so taking a small group and sitting in a circle on a comfy room makes the students feel more comfortable

-Lack of confidence
-Read Live seems to be really fun for students when they know how to do an activity but if they get stuck, their eyes and focus start to wonder
-Yogi has a little bit of an attitude and isn’t afraid to ask the question everyone is wondering
-Afraid that since Thompson is done with small group she will come around and students want to impress

-Boy is confused by Read Live and needs Thompson to refocus him. Doesn’t have the ability to work through a problem on his own yet

-Yogi and Ethel do not interact well with Hmong kids. Power issue? Race issue? Do they feel empowered in the classroom because they do not feel empowered outside of the school in the real world?

-Read Live can be fun when he isn’t stuck
- Yogi and Ethel are getting impatient. They are raising their hands and Thompson hasn't made her way over yet.

- Yogi and I keep making eye contact. She is interested in her surroundings and not Read Live.

- Thompson now went to black girls.

- All kids are quietly reading out loud to themselves; some are using finger to follow along on their screen.

- Thompson to Ethel: “I noticed how you self corrected.”

- Kids now lining up for art in single file line.

- All with backs against the wall, staring at us.

- Hmong boy at end of line is bored and is playing with his shirt by hiding his head.

- Yogi and Ethel try to budge Hmong students in line but Thompson says “Yogi, Ethel, back of line please.” They both roll their eyes and go to the end.

- That group leaves for art, 14 students now enter room and sit at desks.

- Thompson asks what they did in art and hands shoot in the air. This group is more confident.

- Group breaks and “White group” is on rug.

- 8 students in group, 2 Hmong girls on computer, 5 students spaced out at desks reading chapter books.

- Group on rug is reading out loud one at a time and reads fast and confidently.

- One boy who reads out loud reads slow and quietly. Why is he in this reading group?

- Students tell Thompson there aren’t any more chapter books in “White” bin and Thompson checked and said, “What do you mean there aren’t any books? I count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 books!” All the kids laugh and one boy says, “We don’t like those books.” Thompson holds up book and says, “What about this book?” Hmong girl in back scrunches her nose with disgust.

- Those girls are depending on Thompson to help them through their problem, just like the boy earlier with the headset. Thompson is going from student to student answering questions because the kids don’t have the ability to work it out themselves.

- Some of these kids might not have read as much as the average fifth grader; when I was in fifth grade, I was not doing that anymore.

- Thompson probably notices that her students lack confidence, which is why she tries to be so positive about each kid’s reading ability.

- Rule to line up whenever the class leaves the room.

- This group seems happier to be at school and shows much more confidence. I knew immediately that this group must do better than the other group at school.

- This boy must do very well at testing. Is English not his first language? Or he might just be really shy and cautious when he reads in front of a group.

- This group’s personality is more apparent because the students are more relaxed and comfortable.
- Students at computer have Microsoft Word up and are typing a story they wrote on paper
- Jacob is on the computer closest to us and is using his finger to follow along as he reads through what he has typed so far
- Thompson is now at her desk, reading a boy’s story out loud to him. Boy is standing right by desk and his nervously biting nails
- Serena, a black girl with red highlights, stands out because of her height
- Kids must get their handwritten story corrected by Thompson before typing
- New boy is getting his story read out loud to him. He is skinny and short. He smiles as she reads it to him. He has video game characters in the story and Thompson likes it
- New Hmong boy is at her desk now and Thompson says, “Woah, this is long.” He responds with, “Yeah, it’s 11 pages”
- Pudgier boy walks to poster on back wall by Paige and I and finds his name. Poster documents how many books he has read
- Boy at desk near computers by window seems bored. He’s been reading for a while and is looking at screens behind him
- White group is more advanced than 2R
- Class schedule displayed on front whiteboard with what subject is when
- A lot of kids walk like their shoes are too big
- Serena looks more mature than classmates
- Thompson was surprised when the White group told her that the story she was holding was written by someone from the 2R group because it was long
- “It smells like mint” one kid said. Paige and I are chewing gum
- Whole class is together
- Penelope is a leader in class
- Penelope chose Hailey to be the “recorder” and one kid said, “Come on! Choose a boy!”

- This group of students have a lot more freedom. Mrs Thompson can sit at her desk with this group, whereas with the 2R reading group, she had to be constantly walking around and helping kids
- Even in the group of kids that are thriving, confidence levels vary
- Serena is an outcast. The reason why she is a little mean is because she has a hard time making friends and doesn’t know how to act around the Hmong kids

- Even at the young age of fifth grade, the kids are still passionate about things and take it to the next level

- End of the day lack of focus
- Explains confidence difference between the two groups
- Serena gets annoyed by her classmates because she intellectually is above most and is less childish than others
- Even though students in the 2R group are a little behind the others, they have a lot of potential and Thompson is glad to see that
- She also leads her class in the number of books read
- Gender conflict that is apparent in every elementary school classroom
-Class is doing experiment to see how many water drops can fit on a coin. Thompson is projecting it so class can watch on screen

-Thompson asks someone to turn the lights on and a boy from the other side gets up to walk to light switch. Serena, who is sitting right by light switch, says, "Why wouldn’t I turn on the light when I’m sitting right here?"

-After the quarter flooded over, one kid yelled, “Ugh, come on!”

-Kids count number of drops out loud

-Leo had to sit in the take a break chair

-Peter was chosen to use the stopper because he was quiet the entire time

-"I need my fifth graders to be level 0." That means silent

-After experiment, class found the average number of drops on whiteboards and held up

-Serena got excited when she beat Thompson at a long division problem, even though Thompson let her win

-Chubby boy near the front got the answer wrong and Thompson said, “It’s okay, honey, I’ll help you”

-Thompson said to Paige and I that she got put on the assembly committee and she is kind of nervous to speak

-Class is confused about homework because they have to write 5 observations instead of their usual 3

-Class must make 5 connections about what they read

-Serena got in trouble for talking and had to “flip her card”. Every student has a card on the back and has to flip it over when they get in trouble

-Serena rolled her eyes when she was told to go flip her card

-Confusion about who is riding the bus and who is getting picked up because some kids disagree with what Thompson’s sheet says

-Thompson tries to keep the class as interactive as possible to keep the kids engaged and paying attention

-Shows Serena’s way of thinking and how she is more mature than her classmates

-Thompson’s strategy of getting the kids engaged worked well in this experiment

-Classroom rule: if a student misbehaves, they must go sit in the take a break chair in that back of the room

-Serena connects better with Thompson than she does with her classmates

-Thompson wants to see everyone succeed and feel comfortable in the classroom, and feels bad for her kids when someone gets down

-Even though she’s a very confident teacher, she still gets nervous when speaking to a large group

-Thompson pushes her kids out of their comfort zone

-Classroom rule

-Shows Serena’s attitude. She feels bad when Thompson yells at her because Thompson might be her best friend in the class
-Hmong girl near us said, “The chicken fajita for lunch today was disgusting!”

-Kids seem tired and burnt out now

-Kids pass out end of the day snack, which are oranges today

-Kids now sit at their desk reading their chapter books quietly

-The kids grabbed their backpack in silence and then lined up at the door. When the clock reached 4:00PM, the class quietly followed Thompson out the classroom and to the buses

-The kids aren’t afraid to say what they think

-From all the activity of the water drop experiment, the kids are now tired. They have been at school now for the past 7 hours

-Show Thompson’s control of the classroom

Classroom rule of lining up at the door whenever it is time to leave the room. Most kids will go home and take a nap it seems like