

9/12-14/16, Teaching Reflection - shadowing

during this first session of Mountain School I shadowed Ellie, who led a full two and a half days of MS curricula lessons. The trail group was from a 5th grade class from Carl Coyle Elementary, and appeared to be a diverse group of students. Lessons incorporated included the rock cycle, the water cycle, the orographic effect, glaciers, intro to Producers/Consumers/Decomposers, the LAWS of life, each one teach one, microscope lab, animal adaptations, and the Web of Life.

One thing I noticed early on about Ellie's teaching style was how she used games and team-building activities to establish a rapport with the students, before moving into more educational lessons. It seemed like this helped the students get more comfortable with each other and with us, building a mutual trust that remained important throughout the rest of our time together. Ellie also finished both Monday and Tuesday with a silent sensory activity, and I found this to be very effective. On Monday this took the form of a guided meditation, in which students and adults lay down in the moss in a relatively flat, dry area of ground in the forest. Ellie talked us through a meditation that involved concentrating on each part of our body, using all the senses and noticing features of the ground and the sky directly above that we might not have been tuned into otherwise. I'm not sure that I could lead that particular activity myself, mainly because I'm not confident about being able to produce the right ambience for a meditation. However, it made me realize the importance of incorporating silent sensory activities into a day of learning.

There were other activities when Ellie was talking a bit - such as during the glaciers lesson - and I worried the lesson might be drifting into the Sage on the Stage model and away from the Guide on the Side. Jenny, who was also shadowing

the same trail group, brought this to my attention when she mentioned that Ellen was talking a lot more than Jenny herself planned to do as an instructor. I feel like the glacier and topographic lessons in particular are hard to make highly interactive for the students, since they involve exploring a lot of complex scientific topics. For this reason, I may try to focus less time on these particular lessons when I am teaching.

I myself did just a bit of teaching during this session, having volunteered to lead the plant each one Teach one on Tuesday. I felt it was pretty successful. I followed the advice of the lesson description in our naturalist binders, and used conifer cones in the beginning to explain and demonstrate how the shared teaching would work. Afterwards Ellen commented that she thought this had worked well. I did have some trouble helping the students remember all the facts about their plants. Trian suggested that next time I have the students read back each part to me after writing it down, to make sure they will be ready to share with their peers.

Overall it was a good session and I look forward to the next one.