Nathaniel Nauman

Amy Golightly

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Field Journal – 10/13/2011

 Today I started helping to tutor some middle school students at one of the local middle schools. I was not very confident in what I was doing when I first arrived at the school and started tutoring, but as the tutoring session progressed I felt more comfortable and confident in what I was doing. One thing that I need to decide before my next visit is how much I should help students. I know that I should help students with the paper math homework as much as possible, but with the online homework (Study Island) where they are trying to get “blue ribbons,” should I make sure that each problem is solved correctly, or should I allow the students to make some mistakes so that they can learn from their own mistakes? It is also worth noting that the teachers from the school who were there did not help out as much as I did, so I am pretty sure that I should encourage students to figure more things out for themselves instead of walking them through everything.

 Sometimes students got too active, loud, or off topic and I was not sure how I should act and what I could do to calm them down. One student, who I suspect may have ADHD or ADD, had an especially difficult time paying attention and following directions, although most of the students seemed to struggle with paying attention to some extent. Another student, who may have been one of the smartest students there, was helping other students to understand the material. While this was good, to some extent the student appeared to almost be doing the other students’ homework for them, at least part of the time. Furthermore, this student seemed to be aware of this but kept on occasionally doing other students’ homework anyways. I really do not know how I should respond to this situation, but I think that next time I will make sure that the school teachers who are there are aware of what is happening and then let them decide what should be done.

 Finally, I overheard some of the students (6th or 7th grade, 11-13 years old) talk about who they were dating and even who they had already broken up with. I cannot help but wonder if this is too young to start dating someone, assuming this is anything like real/adult dating instead of just a kid’s version so that they can feel grown up and mature. In any event, there really is not much I can do about this situation, so for now I will just try to observe the situation as it develops, see what happens and try to better understand these middle school students.