

Field Experiences Reflection Journal

EDLD7738

1/15/2025; 1/25/2025; 1/29/2025

I did not expect to celebrate my birthday and Lunar New Year by attending the district's 10-hour gifted training, but it turned out to be a rewarding experience. I enjoyed reading and discussing scholarly journals on gifted education with a group of AP teachers. The training also gave me an opportunity to learn more about the gifted program at Northview High School. Currently, 687 out of 1,604 students are enrolled in TAG, making up 42.8% of the student population. We offer AP/IB courses, Directed Studies, and Internship opportunities, though we do not currently have TAG seminars or independent projects. With 29 AP courses available, Mr. Smarr, our TAG coordinator, work with 12 Directed Studies students and 25 interns. During the training, we also brainstormed lesson plan ideas for our AP classes, and as always, I love experimenting with new ideas with my AP students.

1/15/2025; 1/30/2025

International Night at Northview High School is the biggest event of the year, featuring two major components: Culture Bite in the cafeteria and student performances in the auditorium. Together, these attractions draw thousands of attendees annually.

My role was to organize student clubs to decorate the front entry and media center. Back in October, I ordered beautiful lanterns and giant New Year boxes, and my students did an amazing job making the school look welcoming and festive. We also planned our booth with snacks and fun activities.

Our parent liaison, who organized Culture Bite, was my go-to person throughout the process. She loved the idea of incorporating a dragon dance into the event. However, with delayed shipments and a snow day, we had only about a week to practice. The dragon itself was 18 meters long, and neither my students nor I had any prior experience. Despite the challenges, we pulled it off—thanks to the hard work and dedication of our students, especially Nathan, the president of our honor society.

1/28/2025; 1/29/2025

My January has been full of surprises. Two days before the Mayor of Johns Creek and the district school board president were scheduled to visit Northview for a Q&A session with students interested in government, law, and civic engagement, the principal asked me to serve as the host and introduce them. As the advisor to the political club organizing the event, I gladly took on the role.

Leading up to the meeting, we communicated multiple times with the mayor's office and Ms. McCabe, the newly elected school board president, to confirm dates and discussion topics. Hosting a session with politicians for the first time—especially with my school leaders watching from the back of the room—was nerve-racking.

Another challenge I encountered was guiding ambitious yet inexperienced student activists. They were vocal and passionate, but when it came to logistical tasks—like preparing water, flowers, and thank-you notes for the speakers—no one wanted to step up.

2/5/2025

I am incredibly grateful for Dr. Ingrid Parham at Chattahoochee High School. She exemplifies both competence and grace. Her typical day at Hooch begins at 7:00 a.m., managing time and resources for teachers and staff. She has developed an efficient system to track substitute requests, ensuring that department chairs stay informed.

Each morning, she checks in with teachers across the Math, TAG, and Fine Arts departments. She also took the time to introduce me to everyone—from Principal Dr. Todd and the two other assistant principals present that day to the media specialist, counselors, and classroom teachers. Now in her fifth year at Hooch, Dr. Parham is gradually delegating more responsibilities to the three newer assistant principals.

During second period, we observed and supported a long-term substitute in a math class. Dr. Parham also introduced me to AP Classroom through the College Board. Given my strong interest in using data to support student learning, she walked me through how they utilize MAP and PSAT testing data to monitor student progress. Their MTSS process is both well-structured and diligently followed.

Beyond academics, Dr. Parham plays a key role in preparing seniors for graduation, including discussing speech criteria with them. She also shared how she revamped the “Teacher of the Year” selection process to be more objective, forming a panel of parents, teachers, and students while incorporating teacher feedback into this year's process.

We also covered lunch duty in the cafeteria, and I had school lunch for the first time with a group of high schoolers—a fun experience! Before leaving for the day, I asked Dr. Parham a burning question: with her advanced degree and leadership experience, why isn't she a principal yet? Her response reminded me that politics exist everywhere. I don't know which school will be lucky enough to have her as a principal one day, but they will certainly gain an exceptional leader.

2/6/2025; 2/7/2025

I sat down with Ms. DiSano and Ms. Butera, two assistant principals at Northview High School.

Ms. DiSano started her career as a social studies teacher before becoming a department chair, 504/SST/MTSS coordinator, and now an assistant principal. She has been with the district for almost 20 years, and her son, Ryan, is currently a senior at Northview. She is deeply inspired by the idea of servant leadership and believes that school leaders do their best to serve the community. However, she finds it frustrating when teachers and staff resist doing what is right. For instance, she has observed that while teachers often engage in the planning phase, they struggle to move into action when it comes to using data effectively. She shared that shadowing and interviewing school leaders was one of the most valuable experiences in her own professional growth. I truly appreciate her time and patience.

Ms. Butera looks no older than 25, so I was shocked to learn that she had retired from the district and is now working part-time as an assistant principal. Her primary responsibility is scheduling—a daunting task at the high school level. She has a passion for puzzles, which makes scheduling the perfect challenge for her. She began her career as a special education teacher and worked her way up to administration. She walked me through the entire school-year scheduling process, which, at a top-ranked school like Northview, can be especially complex. With so many high-achieving students and parents who have high expectations, scheduling becomes even trickier when students want to take summer classes or waive into more advanced courses.

1/23/2025; 1/24/2025

One of my New Year's resolutions is to become a better communicator. As a member of the School Governance Council (SGC) this year, I want to ensure that teachers and staff stay informed about what's happening at Northview. When information is unclear or lacking, rumors tend to spread. My goal is to be a reliable source of accurate, up-to-date information and to contribute positively to our school community.

At the recent SGC meeting, Mr. Neuhaus provided several key updates:

- **Student Enrollment:** This semester, Northview welcomed 24 new students while four withdrew, resulting in a net gain of 20 students. The projected enrollment for next year is 1,566 students.
- **School Allotment Guidelines (SAG):** Fulton County has approved our SAG for the upcoming year, with additional details to be shared at the next meeting.
- **Facility Upgrades:** A new soundboard has been installed in the auditorium, and upgrades to both the speakers and AC generator are scheduled for this summer.
- **Building Security:** As staff members receive new Fulton County ID badges, all doors in the building will be equipped with a scan system to enhance security. Ensuring the safety of students and staff remains a top priority.
- **Student Support:** The district is implementing the Linewize System on all Fulton County devices to help identify and support students who may need assistance.
- **Upcoming Events:**

- ◆ **International Night** has been rescheduled to January 30, 2025, allowing our community more time to prepare for this major event.
- ◆ **Community Night** will take place next Thursday evening.
- **SGC Elections:** Parent and teacher elections will be held from February 3 to March 28.
- **Funding Approval:** The SGC has approved \$25,000 to fund the Pathways2Life program for the next school year.

By sharing these updates, I hope to foster better communication and transparency within our school community.

2/10/2025; 2/11/2025

I started taking a data in education course this semester, and to deepen my understanding of data, I make it a point to sit down with my mentor whenever she is available to discuss what I've learned in class versus the reality at my school. Here is my reflection so far. Our school district, like many others, collects a variety of student data, including academic records (grades and transcripts), attendance information, disciplinary actions, health records, contact details, and demographic information. For individual schools, CCRPI scores often seem to define success. When my high school received our score last December, it created significant tension within the school. As a traditionally high-ranking academic school, we fell short in a few categories. The principal hosted meetings with all staff to discuss the results and brainstorm possible solutions.

As my mentor mentioned, it was not a tradition at our school to sit down and analyze testing results, so the principal faced significant obstacles, as many teachers felt they were being blamed for the areas of underperformance. I believe the first step is to establish a routine of reviewing assessment results to ensure everyone is on the same page. Our collective goal should be to achieve student success and do what's best for all students.

I've been at my current school for four years, and I've yet to see any data displayed prominently anywhere. When I asked my AP about it, she explained that we don't have a data room or a dedicated data specialist. As a former data specialist herself, she is passionate about using data to improve student outcomes. We both agree that we need to analyze AP, EOC, SAT, ACT, and unit assessment results to drive school improvement over the next 5 to 10 years.

2/12; 2/13; 2/14/2025

High school can be intimidating for both students and their parents. Meetings like this help lessen the unknown and ease anxiety. I attended an IEP transition meeting for current 8th graders at River Trail, which was my first time participating in meetings like this. I realized that collaboration between the middle and high school special education departments is essential for ensuring a smooth transition for these students. Parents, students, counselors, special education teachers, and general education teachers were all in attendance.

During the meeting, we discussed students' strengths, weaknesses, dreams, and plans for high school. A four-year academic plan was outlined, giving students and parents the opportunity to

provide input and ask questions. High school IST and teachers were also present to address any concerns and offer guidance.

2/20/2025

My principal recommended that I attend this school board meeting because the board had to make a formal decision regarding the closure of two local elementary schools. Leading up to this meeting, previous town hall sessions were held where emotions ran high, as many parents strongly opposed the closures. Parents voiced concerns about the impact on their children's education, longer commute times, and the loss of a close-knit school community.

On the other hand, the school district argued that both buildings required significant renovations, and with declining enrollment, the cost of such extensive repairs could not be justified. Financial reports presented by district officials outlined the projected costs of renovation versus the potential savings from consolidation. Despite these explanations, many parents remained unconvinced, believing that alternative solutions should be explored to keep the schools open.

The meeting itself was tense, with passionate speeches from parents, teachers, and community members urging the board to reconsider. Some parents cited sentimental value, sharing personal stories about how these schools had shaped their families' lives, while others questioned the accuracy of the district's enrollment projections and financial calculations. Meanwhile, board members emphasized their responsibility to allocate resources efficiently and ensure that all students receive the best possible education within budget constraints.

Ultimately, the board was tasked with making a difficult decision, balancing financial realities with the concerns of the community. The meeting served as a firsthand experience of how complex and emotionally charged school governance decisions can be.

2/21/2025

I spent a day at Johns Creek High School, and despite it being only about a mile from Northview and Chattahoochee High School, I noticed a significant difference in atmosphere—it felt much more laid back. One of the first things I saw in the morning was parents volunteering at the front office, something I hadn't observed at either of the other schools.

Throughout the day, I had the opportunity to speak with everyone I met in the building, which I truly appreciated. I shadowed one of their Assistant Principals, Ms. Moyer, who spent much of her day communicating with teachers, often via phone. It was clear she has a close relationship with them. Ms. Moyer previously worked at Northview as a special education teacher and department chair. Two years ago, she became an Administrative Assistant at Johns Creek and was later promoted to Assistant Principal. She shared that her strengths lie in building strong relationships with those she supervises, as well as with her coworkers and supervisors. She also pointed out that managing adults is very different from managing high schoolers.

I attended an ACT prep training session for teachers with her, which reinforced what she meant. Instead of relying on a long PowerPoint presentation, she led a Q&A-style discussion, keeping teachers engaged.

I also visited several classrooms and spoke with a dozen teachers in the hallways. One of my key observations was that the school appeared to be more lenient with phone and other policies. During lunch duty, I had conversations with cafeteria staff, counselors, police officers, the graduation coach, and other APs. It was interesting to learn about their diverse backgrounds—one of them was even a former band teacher.

As a world language teacher, I had always worried that my chances of becoming an AP might be limited but seeing the variety of paths people have taken reassured me that anything is possible.

2/25; 2/26/2025

I spent five hours with our head counselor, Ms. Cara Dunn, who has been with Northview for almost 10 years. Interestingly, she started as a testing coordinator in her first year before transitioning into a counseling role. That day, several counselors led a field trip, taking around 50 students on a comprehensive college tour.

Ms. Dunn shared that working as a high school counselor is quite different from being an elementary or middle school counselor. Throughout the day, she invited several students to her office to discuss their schedules for the next school year. Surprisingly, some students didn't show up—catching students in high school can be challenging. Many upperclassmen, for instance, are in dual enrollment programs and don't arrive at school at 8:20 AM like the rest of the students.

With students' permission, I was able to sit in on these meetings. One key observation was that nearly all students wanted to take as many summer courses as possible to skip a level or two and jump straight into honors or AP courses the following year—despite counselors warning against it. A six-week online course cannot fully replace a year of face-to-face instruction, and a weaker foundation in any subject can create major hurdles down the road. However, students and parents don't always heed the counselors' advice.

Another common issue Ms. Dunn raised is that many parents do too much for their children. The counseling department frequently receives emails from parents asking how to sign up for courses or fill out applications, even though information sessions are held for students and clear instructions are provided. As a parent myself, I understand the urge to help, but as children grow, parents need to learn to step back. Instead of doing things for them, parents should model the process, encourage independence, and let them try on their own. I've certainly encountered helicopter parents, and honestly, I worry that these students will struggle in college or their careers. Their parents are inadvertently robbing them of the opportunity to develop essential life skills, such as communication and problem-solving.

3/3/2025

The School Governance Council hosted a meeting at the Northview Media Center, bringing together principals, teachers, parents, and school board members from our cluster. We received community updates from the board president, Ms. McCabe.

Mrs. Lemerond, principal of Shakerag Elementary School, provided a recap of the previous meeting, which focused on developing well-rounded children and the new Change of School Assignment (COSA) process. This led to a key discussion point: how can schools attract more students?

Mr. Pinnock and Mr. Neuhaus shared the steps being taken to support students transitioning from 5th to 6th grade and from 8th to 9th grade. Mrs. Christopher from Findley Oaks shared strategies to increase parent engagement, particularly in SGC initiatives.

Northview is also preparing to host its very first community basketball game on March 26th. This event aims to bring community members to Northview, showcase the different schools in our cluster, and foster connections among teachers, school leaders, and families, ultimately strengthening our sense of community.

3/6, 3/13/2025

As a member of the budget committee, I had access to the 2025-2026 school year budget report before the SGC's official vote to approve it this week. The new parent representative raised several insightful questions about next year's budget, ranging from staffing allocations to detailed expenses beyond salaries and benefits.

With our high school facing declining enrollment, certain departments will see reductions in teaching staff. This is partly due to course selection trends—many students opt for summer courses online to skip a level or two, while others take dual enrollment courses or Georgia Tech math to strengthen their college applications.

I've also noticed an increasing number of teacher retirements. While some are simply ready for the next chapter of their lives, recent changes at both the district and federal levels are affecting funding and teacher training. Adapting to these changes—especially those related to technology—can be challenging for veteran teachers.

I have served as the Parliamentarian of Northview's SGC for two years, and my goal this year is to improve communication between the school and SGC, fostering a greater sense of community among staff. I also want to step up as both the SGC chair and the World Language Department chair next school year. At the same time, I aim to deepen my understanding of the 504 and MTSS processes to prepare for my long-term goal: becoming an Administrative Assistant (AA) and eventually an Assistant Principal (AP) within the next five years.

3/4/2025

World language programs, especially those offering Chinese, are facing declining support. While Spanish and French have seen a drop in student enrollment over the past few years, the situation for Chinese is even more challenging—we don't have enough schools offering these rigorous language programs to begin with, and finding qualified teachers remains a constant struggle. Unfortunately, we recently lost another Chinese teacher, who decided to take a position at an international school in China.

I don't blame him. Every time we had a district-wide Chinese teacher PLC, he voiced his frustrations about the lack of support at his school and the blame he received whenever something went wrong. Experiences like his highlight the importance of creating a strong network among veteran teachers—especially on professional development (PD) days—so we can exchange ideas, brainstorm ways to strengthen our programs, and foster a community that values cultural awareness.

I was inspired by Ms. He, who single-handedly built a successful Chinese program at Webb Bridge Middle School. Nineteen years later, it's still going strong. One of her ideas that resonated with me was forming a dragon dance team.

When my students came together to assemble an 18-meter-long dragon and performed for the first time at International Night, I knew the idea had worked. I saw the pride on their faces, and the audience was in awe of the performance. Even months later, students and teachers still talk about it. The impact was so strong that my 2½-year-old daughter continues to excitedly tell people about the dragon dance she saw at her mommy's school.

3/8/2025

This was my second time working at the job fair for my school, thanks to my mentor. I had the opportunity to meet all the principals I had interviewed with, the zone superintendent, and Mr. Looney, our district superintendent.

A job fair is the kind of event that requires complete focus—once it starts, there's a steady flow of candidates lined up at your table, each eager to introduce themselves and ask questions. You greet, answer, and repeat, one after another. Before you even realize it, hours have passed—it was already 11:30 AM before I had a moment to take a breath.

We were looking to hire an ESOL teacher, a language arts teacher, a Spanish teacher, and a counselor. As one of the top-ranked schools in the district, we received a lot of interest. I was surprised to see a few familiar faces from last year's fair.

Communication skills are key at an event like this. This year, I felt much more comfortable asking and answering questions, and I also had the chance to observe hundreds of candidates with varying communication styles and confidence levels. Building an instant connection with someone is a challenge for job seekers, especially for those fresh out of college. Competing against candidates with years of experience, advanced degrees, and multiple certifications can be daunting, making it even more crucial to stand out with strong interpersonal skills.

