

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.

3/17/2025

I attended the District School Governance Council Strategy Planning Spring Retreat with our principal, Mr. Martin Neuhaus, at Fulton's North Learning Center. While this was not my first SGC retreat, it carried significantly more weight than previous ones. The conference room was filled with nearly 100 principals from across Fulton County. I had previously met several of them, so it was a great opportunity to reconnect, network with new leaders, and plan upcoming school visits for my next field experience. The most valuable takeaway from the day was gaining a broader perspective on strategic planning across elementary, middle, and high school levels during our group activities. I also appreciated the chance to connect more closely with Mr. Neuhaus.

3/26/2025

"Keeping a relentless focus on data." That saying truly came to life during my visit to a Blue Ribbon Award-winning elementary school this past week. The principal's strong emphasis on instruction and data echoed that mindset.

I work at a high school and always get excited about visiting elementary schools in our area. During this visit, we were divided into three groups, and each group had the opportunity to visit six different classrooms—observing teachers across various grade levels in action. Afterward, I had the privilege of sitting down with other visitors, including program specialists, principals, instructional support teachers, and our zone superintendent. We held an observation debrief and discussed next steps, followed by a robust data discussion.

Our conversations centered on important questions: What can we learn from the district's multiple assessment reports and other formative assessments? Which subgroups are we focusing on? What additional supports are being put in place for the End of Year Assessments (Georgia Milestones)? And how are we monitoring progress?

I was especially impressed by the principal's commitment to growth for all students—not just those who are struggling. During the walkthrough, I noticed students in grades 3–5 were being taught to track their own data, particularly through i-Ready math and reading. It was inspiring to see students actively engaged with their progress.

That said, I would love the opportunity to see their PLCs in action—specifically how they are using multiple assessment sources, unit exams, and even exit tickets to triangulate data and identify trends. The principal was refreshingly honest about an area of growth: writing. She acknowledged it as a schoolwide weakness and shared that they are diving deep into their writing data and have even asked the district for additional support in addressing it.

3/26/2025

Northview's School Governance Council organized its first-ever Cluster Community Night Basketball Game, bringing together staff teams from Shakerag Elementary, Findley Oaks Elementary, Wilson Creek Elementary, and River Trail Middle School to compete in a spirited tournament. Each school hosted a series of promotional activities to rally support from their communities. Northview's Cheerleaders, Marching Band, Orchestra, and Step Dance Team

energized the crowd with performances during intermission. The event drew an enthusiastic turnout, filling the main gym with over 750 community members, including many young students and their families. It was a wonderful opportunity for elementary and middle school students to experience the Northview spirit. The winning staff team from the cluster went on to play a friendly match against the Northview Lady Titans, who have had an outstanding season.

4/2/2025

Autrey Mill Middle School was the next stop on my leadership field experience. Mr. Martin, the principal, has dedicated 30 years to education, including 20 years as a principal—10 of those at Autrey Mill. After our meeting, he introduced me to the grade-level assistant principals, all of whom previously served in high schools. They shared the unique challenges of high school leadership, particularly balancing evening responsibilities with family life. I had the opportunity to shadow them throughout the day, participating in building walks, lunch duty, student incident investigations, and meetings with concerned parents—an immersive experience that gave me a clearer picture of the assistant principal role. I also observed a district-led safety training, where nurses conducted a real-life scenario drill with the school's safety team, which was a first for me. Before returning to Northview, I attended an MTSS meeting focused on data for 7th and 8th grade students, discussing the interventions in place, their effectiveness, and strategies for moving forward.

4/2/2025

I helped organize a college application Q&A session for underclassmen, where seniors who had recently completed the application process shared their insights through well-prepared slide presentations. They walked 9th and 10th grade students through each step of the process, offering practical tips and personal experiences. I enjoy supporting events like this because they give upperclassmen a meaningful opportunity to develop their leadership skills while giving back to the school community. The underclassmen were highly engaged and eager to learn from their peers, gaining clarity and direction amid the overwhelming amount of information surrounding today's competitive college admissions landscape.

4/15/2025

Webb Bridge Middle School was the final school I visited—and arguably the most impressive. One standout reason is their exceptionally strong Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). I had the opportunity to attend two PLC meetings, both of which operated with seamless collaboration and focus. It was a powerful example of what truly effective PLCs should look like, and I was genuinely inspired.

Principal Julie Morris, who has 21 years of experience in education, began her career as a third-grade teacher before becoming a Curriculum Support Teacher. Three years later, she stepped into an assistant principal role, and a decade ago, she became the principal at Lake Windward Elementary before eventually leading Webb Bridge. Her depth of knowledge in PLCs is remarkable, and I appreciated how thoughtfully she shared that expertise with me.

I also toured the building with Mr. Mike Milak, the 6th-grade assistant principal, who is considered the school's "building expert." With over 30 years in education, he shared the school's structural history, identified potential facility issues, and explained the proactive solutions they've implemented. I was also fortunate to shadow Ms. Carmen Hurst, another assistant principal, who brought me along for TKES classroom observations. She engaged me in reflective questioning to analyze each classroom's strengths and areas for growth—a truly valuable learning experience.

To top it off, I was invited to lunch with Ms. Morris and Mr. Milak, where their warmth and authenticity made me feel truly welcomed. I am incredibly grateful for their hospitality and support. I've already started reading the PLC books Ms. Morris recommended, eager to learn more from this enriching visit.

4/24/2025

The Northview SGC meeting was held after school, marking the end of another productive year. It's hard to believe I've now served on the committee for two years. Throughout this time, I've learned a great deal about school operations, strategic planning, budgeting, action plans, and community engagement. While we were well-prepared for the meeting, we unfortunately overlooked organizing a thank-you gift for the parent volunteer who is stepping down—something to keep in mind for the future. I was especially proud of our student representatives, who asked thoughtful questions that Mr. Neuhaus addressed with care and detail. I truly appreciate how our SGC meetings are conducted—with clear expectations, structured agendas, and consistent follow-up that leads to real action. Personally, I believe all meetings should operate this effectively. I'm glad we concluded our final meeting of the year on such a strong and successful note.

4/25/2025

21st Century Leaders, the leadership club I advise, hosts an annual college panel around this time of year, inviting eight seniors who were accepted into top colleges to share their personal experiences. This year, we collaborated with 3DE and Simply Advice to organize the event. Approximately 50 attendees joined us, most of whom were parents. The student speakers were eloquent and well-prepared, and the event came together smoothly. However, we identified two key improvements for next year: first, we plan to host the panel in the media center rather than the auditorium. With only 50 attendees, the auditorium felt too large, and passing the microphone around during the Q&A proved cumbersome. Second, we will avoid scheduling the event the day before Prom—an occasion that inevitably takes priority for students.

4/26/2025

I chaperoned Prom for the first time this year, and since I attended high school in China where we didn't have Prom, it was technically my first prom experience as well. The event was held at a rooftop venue in Downtown Atlanta, and the two teachers who organized it clearly put in a tremendous amount of effort. Around 500 students and their guests arrived dressed in their finest attire—some of them I hardly recognized. Many came up to introduce their girlfriends or

boyfriends to me, and I couldn't help but feel like a proud parent. It's hard to believe I've taught some of them for four years, and now they're preparing to head off to college. I was fortunate to be assigned the early shift; otherwise, I likely wouldn't have made it home until after midnight. Experiences like this remind me how demanding high school leadership can be—with frequent evening events and late-night responsibilities. It's no surprise that many administrators eventually transition to middle or elementary school leadership roles.