Jamie Florindi

EDU 355 Reflections

Cortland Christian Academy

Fall 2011

**Day #1: September 27th:**

This was the first day that I went to the Cortland Christian Academy for observation. I noticed that the school was small and it was a church and school together. Karyn and I met Mrs. DeHart in the main office and we headed down to the gym. The first class we had from 10:00-10:30 was the kindergarten and first graders. What I noticed was that the class was very small (around 15 students at most). The students had a set routine when they walked into the gym and they knew to line up on the half court line and listen to their teacher. I was impressed at how well the students listened to Mrs. DeHart when she spoke to them. The students knew the strike system if they did not listen to the teacher. They get a warning on the first strike, sit out for the second strike, and get sent to their teacher if they get a third strike. On the first day, the students played a follow the leader game with different locomotor movements. Karyn and myself were able to call out certain locomotor movements for the students to follow. I was excited to get involved right in the beginning and see if the students would listen to us. I was surprised that they listened to us as much as they would if we were their regular teacher. They gave us a lot of respect and welcomed us with open arms. I think the students were excited to have some new faces in their classroom that had high energy. From the beginning, Karyn and I opened ourselves up to getting to know the students and having a good time with them. I think that when your students see that your having a good time and participating, that makes them want to enjoy themselves as well and play each activity even if they don’t enjoy it as much. What upset me and what I would change goes hand in hand for me. It upset me that there was not much equipment for Mrs. DeHart to work with in her classroom. I know its something that we might not be able to change but it would be beneficial for the students to have more equipment to work with if possible. The school may be on a budget and the physical education teacher may not have a degree in the subject, but it is important to open up the students to new activities and not just playing tag games the whole time. Yes tag games can be fun, but we must also work on locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative skills with these students. We can also work on putting together developmentally appropriate activities for the students to engage in. We want to keep them involved in physical education as they get older and we want them to find out what they are good at.

**Day #2: October 4th**

On the second day of observation, Karyn and I were able to get right into teaching the students. We knew that the K-1 group enjoyed playing tag games so we figured that we could get them motivated by playing a game of turtle tag with them. We started the game by asking the students about turtles and what they knew about them. The students wanted to get right into playing and that is exactly what they did. They listened to our voice when we told them to freeze and stayed in between the boundary lines that we set up for them. We then worked on locomotor movements using the lines on the gym floor. The students used their manners by saying excuse me to one another when they crossed pathways. The students were open to trying new things and impressed me with their listening skills. We tried to pick activities that were developmentally appropriate for this group of students, and during the closure they said that they enjoyed all the games that we played that day. The second and third grade group impressed me with their listening skills as well. We started out with Blob Tag as our instant activity to get the students moving instantly and to let them get out any extra energy they had built up in their system. Karyn and I did a variety of beanbag activities with this group to work on throwing and catching as well as working with a partner. We also included working on locomotor skills while working with beanbags as well. I would probably spend a little less time on the instant activity next time and more time on the lesson focus. The first class the students were playing soccer and I feel as though we can include activities with kicking and passing in our next lesson. During our closure, the students seemed as though they had a good time with us as their teacher and were excited for the next week coming up. I think Karyn and myself will be able to teach these students a lot during our observation and I believe they will impress us with their skills. Everyone is extremely motivated when it comes to physical education class and are well disciplined. I am excited for the coming weeks.

**Day #3: October 11th**

Karyn and myself were able to teach once again today at the Cortland Christian Academy. This week it was great to come back and have the students remember our names and what we did last week in class. We always start out with a tag game so that the students can use up all the extra energy they have built up since the morning. These students have been sitting in a classroom all day so it is important to get them moving first thing. We played a game of Pole Tag and then moved on to Mouse Trap with the beanbags. For the most part, all the students listened once again and we did not have to give out any warnings. The students treat us with the utmost respect when we are in the classroom and know the rules and protocols for when they first get into class to when they line up to get a drink and go back to the classroom. We had to check for understanding a few times during our activities and repeat ourselves a number of times, but all the activities that we had planned for the day worked out just how we expected them to. The second group was enthusiastic and excited for the activities for the morning as well. We started out with a tag game to get them moving first thing and to wake up anyone who was still feeling sleepy. Since the students are in the classroom until they get to physical education class, it is important to start moving first thing so that the students can enter the lesson with a clear head. We worked a lot on fitness concepts for the day such as sit ups and push ups, but the students didn’t even realize they were doing it! We had the students pretend they were spaghetti and meatballs for the sit-ups, and we had them high five each other for the push-ups. Karyn, myself, and Mrs. DeHart all went around to each of the students to correct their form on their push-ups. We made sure that their backs were flat enough so that if a cup were to rest on their back it wouldn’t fall off and spill. We closed our activity by pretending our legs were bridges and there were ships sailing under our legs. We had to raise our legs high and low keeping our balance and trying not to touch our hands to the floor. Students gave out examples of boats and we used those in our lessons as well. I feel as though it is important to get the students involved with the class and let them have input where needed. If they feel more involved with the class then they will want to keep participating each time they come.

**Day #4: October 18th**

During observation today, Karyn and myself started out with Remote Control Tag with our first group. The activity worked very well because all of the students listened to instructions before starting the game. We started out with a few cues and then added on as each of the students understood the task that they were going to complete. We first started out with fast-forward, pause, and play. After the students caught on we added more steps such as rewind and when we called out a channel the students had to do that many jumping jacks. We then planned to do Forest Ranger with the class, which did not work out as well. I am not sure if we did not explain it well, or if it was just a hard concept for the students to understand. Many of the students that were trees on the inner circle were getting confused with the students on the outside of the circle. Karyn and I decided that to avoid confusion for next time, we should put half of the group in pinnies and the other half not in pinnies. This way the students will not be confused with who is in the inner circle and who is in the outer circle. I learned today that if a game you plan out does not work, try to modify it for the class so that everyone can understand it. If the class still does not understand with the modifications, then have a back up plan and make sure you plan more activities than you think you are going to need. Today we started out working on the basic skills of soccer with the 2nd and 3rd grade group. The first day we observed the class, they played a small game of soccer. Karyn and myself figured out that we could work on their skills and start to explain concepts on offense and defense and controlling the ball. The students worked by them controlling the soccer ball through the gates we set up with cones. After they did this for a little while, the students were able to pass the soccer ball through the gates with a partner. If the activity was too easy for the students, we made the gates smaller for them to challenge their skills. The activities with the second group worked very well and it was something that we will be able to expand on for the next few passes and then maybe get into a small modified soccer game with the entire class.

**Day #5: October 25th**

The activities we decided on for teaching the first group today focused a lot on working with partners to achieve a goal. We haven’t done much with partners yet with the kindergarten and first grade group so Karyn and myself wanted to try it out with the class. We did not let the students pick their partners so that there was not much of a disagreement when we paired the students together. It was also faster this way and it left less time in between transitions and more time for activity. The students stayed with their partners for the first two activities that we did. We made sure to explain the rules for the first activity which was “Shadow Shake” that when we said freeze the students needed to be an arms length away from each other. This kept the students safe and helped to avoid any injuries. We started out with a slow jog, and then moved on to locomotor movements such as skipping and sliding as well to change it up. We then played a similar game with the same partners where the students had to switch roles if they were tagged. This also helped the students work with their peers together in a partner activity and they were able to work with students that they wouldn’t normally work with in class. Since the students were well behaved, we used the reward system and let them play their favorite tag game at the end of the class period. Karyn and myself have learned that if the students behave, playing a tag game at the end that they all enjoy will keep them focused and excited for the next time we come to teach. For the second group, we kept working on different soccer skills that will help the students implement in a game setting. We started out first with dribbling keep away where each student had their own soccer ball and worked to protect it from their other classmates. We stressed the importance of keeping their heads up and staying inside the boundary line. To make the activity harder, we made the boundaries smaller and smaller so that the students had more opportunity to practice keeping the ball away from their peers. After this we worked on fitness before moving to the next activity. We practiced doing sit-ups with the group but they pretended to be spaghetti and meatballs. This was a great idea because it made the sit-ups fun for the students and they didn’t realize they were doing actual sit-ups. The sit-ups helped with transition time between activities, instead of having the students stand around they were constantly moving. Karyn and myself were defenders for the next activity. The students had a partner and were moving through the gates, but if there was a defender at the gate they had to move to a different gate. The students are working on their soccer skills so that they can advance to a small sided game in the coming weeks.

**Day #6: November 1st**

Karyn and myself wanted to try something different with the kindergarten group this time around. We always set up tag games for them, but we wanted to try to do a specific task with the students. We did activities with beanbags a few weeks ago with the second and third grade group that worked well, so we wanted to try it out on the kindergarten and first grade group. We first started out with a tag game to get their heart rates up and to use any of the extra energy that the students had. We then brought them in and talked briefly about the beanbags. Karyn and myself paired up the students into partners and worked first on balancing the beanbags on different body parts. The students then worked with partners to balance the beanbags on different body parts while moving. We also incorporated locomotor movements such as skipping and hopping while trying to balance the object. The students worked as a team with their partner the entire class and they worked very well together. Karyn and I were impressed with the students and their skill level with the beanbags. Since it worked so well this week, we are going to continue with the beanbags for this group next week. We continued with more soccer skills with the second group. We are using progressions to get up to a small-sided group game in the coming weeks. The first day of observation the students played a large game of soccer, but it seemed as though they needed to be taught the fundamentals of the sport. We started with a tag game to get their heart rates up and then we went into working in groups of 4. We practiced with one student playing offense while the other 3 were playing defense. The job of the defender was just to follow the ball and not steal the ball from their teammates. The offense had the job of passing and then moving around to get open. Once the student passed the ball, the goal was to keep moving into an open space until they got the ball again. The students were able to switch and get to be offense and defense. This worked well for the students and they were able to understand that they had to keep moving when they were on offense. I think that we should start out with this activity for next class and then go into 3 on 2 games and then try to work on small sided soccer games with the class.

**Day # 7: November 8th**

Today was our classroom visit from 10:00 to 10:30 today and our post assessment with the second and third grade group on soccer. Karyn and myself entered a combined second and third grade class this morning. The second graders were sitting on the left and the third graders were sitting on the right. The teacher was mainly teaching the second grade group at this point in time and the third grade group was either reading or doing worksheets. All of the students were staying in their seats and not talking out of turn. The second graders were only talking when the teacher called on them and the third graders were being very quiet and doing their work. I noticed that the classroom was very bright with many pictures and words around the room. Since it is a catholic school, much of the pictures and words on the wall had to do with the Holy Bible and Catholicism. I felt comfortable in the classroom because I attended Catholic school for a few years before going to public school and I went to religion class every Monday night before I made my confirmation. I understood most of the pictures and words on the wall and I felt as though I was in an environment where I knew what everything meant. My religion is something that I take pride in and I liked being in an atmosphere that highlighted my religion and what I have been learning about for years and years. We were with the second and third grade group for the 10:30 to 11:00 time slot today as well. Karyn and myself were planning on post assessing the students on their kicking skills in soccer, something we have been working on for a few weeks. We set up 3 stations in the gym and were able to assess a few students at a time. One station had task cards set up for the students that they had to complete during the given time. The second station was an obstacle course that we set up for the students to dribble the soccer ball around. They were in teams and one team was playing the other. At the third station, we put together a post assessment on kicking for the students, and they were set up kicking the soccer ball at the wall, receiving it, and kicking it back. We had criteria that the students had to follow to either get a yes or a no. The class went by so fast, but we were able to assess all the students. We are planning to either play a small sided soccer game with them next class or take a break from soccer and maybe try something else with this group.

**Day #8: November 15th**

Karyn and I saved our parachute activities for the final days of observation. We have been playing numerous games with the kindergarten and first grade group and we have been doing many different soccer skills with the second and third grade group. We decided to take a break from all of this and try a few parachute games with both groups. We first started out with a tag game to get both of the groups warmed up. It was a tag game that involved the students working together to help each other not get tagged. It was called helper tag, and the concept might have been a little hard for both groups to understand. Many of them did not get the concept of throwing the ball to another individual who was about to get tagged. I would probably change the warm up game for next time to not include Helper Tag. Other than that, our parachute games worked out in a positive way. We had the students wait on the sideline so that we could set out the parachute. We stated the guidelines and the rules for the parachute, and then we assigned two students to one color. We did this one at a time so the students did not run to the parachute and rip it. We taught them how to hold it and what we expected out of all of them when we were playing with the parachute. We started out with both groups by making small waves with the parachute and then having them get bigger and bigger. We ended with the second group by lifting up the parachute over our heads and waving to our fellow classmates under the parachute without putting our entire body under the parachute. The students responded well to this and we did not have any behavior problems with the first or the second group. The second and third graders wanted to put a ball in the middle of the parachute and move it up and down. What we did was we started out the rubber playground ball at a color on the parachute and had the ball travel all the way around to where it started without having the parachute drop on the ground. If the parachute dropped on the ground then we had to start over again. We challenged ourselves by counting how long this took and trying to beat our score for next time. Next class we are going to try and put soft objects in the middle of the parachute and have them bounce the objects up and down without them hitting the outside floor. We are able to do this again next time with both groups because everyone behaved very well and seemed to enjoy him or herself.

**Day #9: November 22nd**

On our last day of observation, Karyn and myself decided that we were going to continue on with parachute games because both age groups loved what we did the past few weeks. Both groups have been asking if we could go under the parachute and we planned a lesson where both groups would be able to do this. We had to go through the rules again with each age group just so that they remember to behave. A lot of them get excited when they see the parachute and don’t listen as well as they would. For the most part, we haven’t had to revoke anyone’s privileges with the parachute. Saying please and thank you to the students really helps their listening, and not losing your patience with them when they do not do something right the first time. I have learned throughout this experience that it is important to give each student a chance. Each student is unique in his or her own way and they may catch on to tasks a little quicker or a little slower than the rest of the class. I also loved participating every week with the students. When the students see the teacher enjoying the activity, they will most likely enjoy themselves as well. I feel as though we have made a big impact in the physical education class at Cortland Christian Academy during these past weeks teaching. The students have grown as individuals and I have grown as a teacher. Now I really know that I am in the right profession and this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. The students were upset that we were leaving them, but we were able to leave our host teacher with the games that we played so that she can utilize them in the future. To see the students happy when you are teaching them and excited about class makes the entire experience worthwhile. I learned a lot this experience about behavior management and sometimes lessons might not go as planned. As a teacher you need to be able to improvise and over plan then be stuck during the middle of the class not knowing what to do next. In addition, if you set up rules in the beginning with your students and routines, they are more likely to follow them and you will have less time during transitions and more time to play. I am sad to leave the Cortland Christian Academy, but I am ready to move on to the next stage of my teaching career.